

The Magazine for Golden Age, Silver Age, & Bronze Age Collectors!

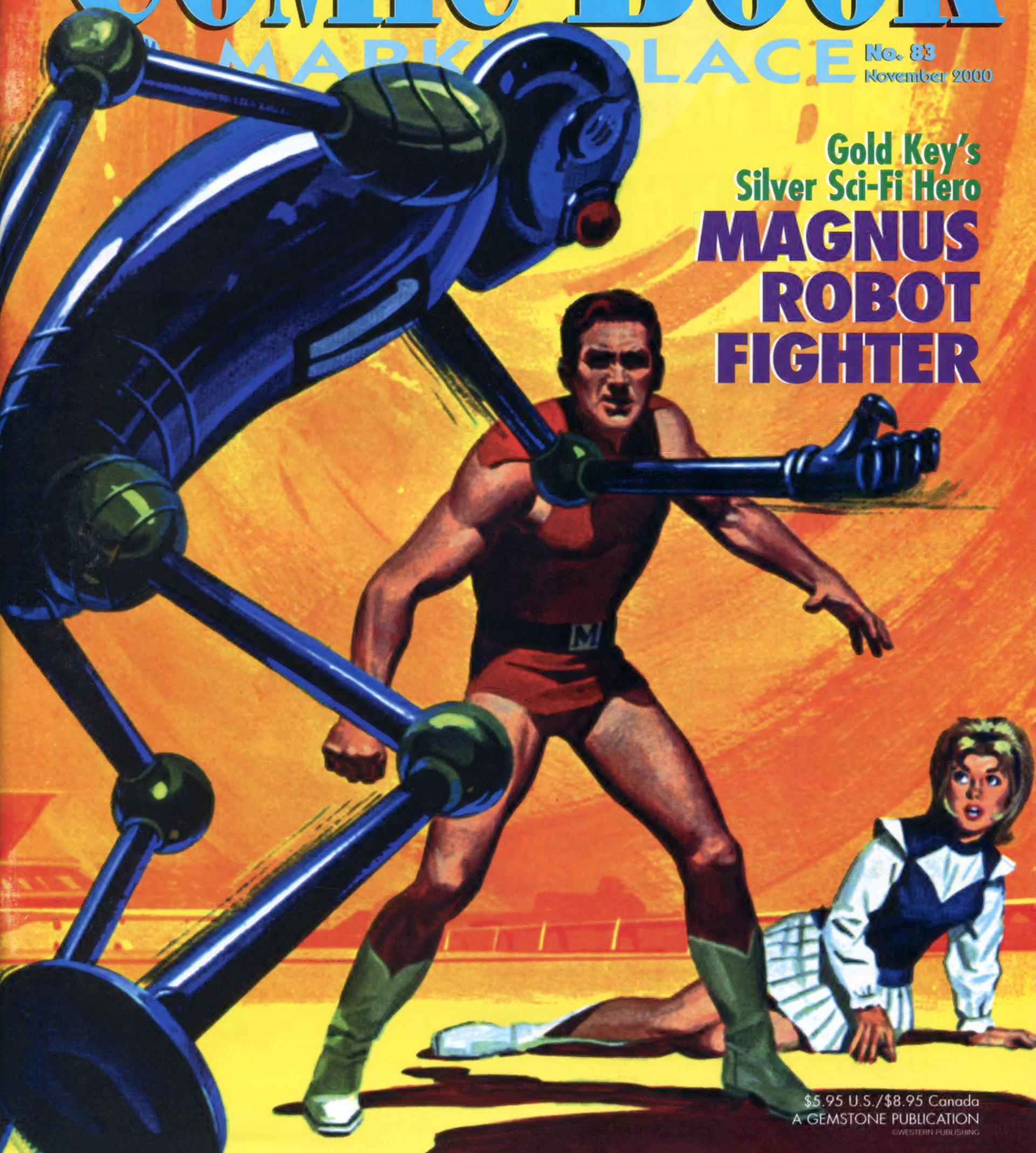
COMIC BOOK

MARKETPLACE

No. 83

November 2000

Gold Key's
Silver Sci-Fi Hero
**MAGNUS
ROBOT
FIGHTER**



\$5.95 U.S./\$8.95 Canada
A GEMSTONE PUBLICATION

©WESTERN PUBLISHING

COMING IN CBM SPECIAL EDITION #5...

THE BEST OF THE WILL MURRAY MYSTERIES

DON'T MISS THESE *ELECTRIFYING* ARTICLES!

- ✓ The Mysterious untold origin of Spider-Man!
- ✓ The Mystery of the First Phantom!
- ✓ More on The Ray Cummings Mystery!
- ✓ The Superhero Before Superman Mystery!
- ✓ DC's Strange & Mysterious Tangled Roots!
- ✓ A Super Mystery... Super Magazines!
- ✓ Mort Weisinger...The Mysterious Sgt. Saturn!
- ✓ The Mystery of the X-Man of 1937!
- ✓ The Riddle of Batman & Raven!
- ✓ The Golden Age Blue Beetle Mystery!
- ✓ Who was Chuck "Blackhawk" Cuidera?
- ✓ *Plus...* an exclusive and rare interview with noted fan, collector, historian, and author Will Murray himself!
- ✓ *Plus...* Two Brand new, NEVER-PUBLISHED Will Murray articles including a startling update to "The Untold Origin of Spider-Man" and "Mighty Marvel Price Variants" packed with astonishing new discoveries and unseen covers... a must-read for all serious Silver Age collectors!
- ✓ *Plus...* 120 BIG pages! Color Cover Gallery-More Gerber White-Space Stickers!



On sale soon at your favorite comic shop
or available directly from Gemstone for \$12 post paid... (619).437-1996

CBM SUBSCRIBERS PLEASE NOTE that CBM Special Editions are not included in your regular subscription

HOT MARKET!

SEE HOW MUCH THEY'RE WORTH!



All characters ©2000 respective Copyright holders. All rights reserved.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOW AVAILABLE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

NEW Larger Format! • 8.5" x 11" • 10,000 Photo illustrations! • 360 Unique Categories! • Pinbacks! • Syroco Figures! • Photos! 928 Pages! • NEW Checklist feature! • NEW Color Section!

The Definitive Visual Guide and Checklist™
HAKE'S PRICE GUIDE TO CHARACTER TOYS
 The Brand New Third Edition! • \$35 (+S&H)

It's all in here! X-Men, Charlie Chaplin, The Cisco Kid, Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Laurel & Hardy, Howdy Doody, Planet of the Apes, MAD, Hopalong Cassidy, Captain America, Toy Guns, Toy Story, Uncle Scrooge, Pokémon, Small Soldiers, Superhero Resins, Batman, Muhammad Ali, Disneyana, Superman, Spider-Man, Roy Rogers, Buck Rogers, KISS, Mickey Mouse, The Lone Ranger, Puppet Master, Elvis, The Phantom, and more! Many rare and one-of-a-kind collectibles are included in the new, expanded and updated listings. A new checklist feature has also been added! All this and more! Available from Collector Books, Gemstone Publishing & Diamond Comic Distributors - Diamond product # MAY001607.

To Order By Phone Call Toll Free (888) 375-9800 ext. 249

Gemstone Publishing, Inc. • 1966 Greenspring Drive • Timonium, MD 21093

Tel: (410) 560-5806 • Fax (410) 560-7143 • E-Mail fancussrv@gemstonepub.com

Visa, MasterCard, Checks & Money Orders Accepted. Please add \$7.00 S&H for the 1st book and \$3.00 for each additional book. CA, MD & MO residents must add applicable sales tax.

SEE HOW MUCH THEY'RE WORTH!



All characters ©2000 respective Copyright holders. All rights reserved.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOW AVAILABLE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

NEW Larger Format! • 8.5" x 11" • 10,000 Photo illustrations! • 360 Unique Categories! • Statues! • Beanbag Figures! • Cookie Jars! 928 Pages! • NEW Checklist feature! • NEW Color Section!

The Definitive Visual Guide and Checklist™

HAKE'S PRICE GUIDE TO CHARACTER TOYS

The Brand New Third Edition! • \$35 (+S&H)

It's all in here! Toy Story, Uncle Scrooge, Pokémon, Small Soldiers, Superhero Resins, Batman, Muhammad Ali, Disneyana, Superman, Spider-Man, Roy Rogers, Buck Rogers, KISS, Mickey Mouse, The Lone Ranger, Puppet Master, Elvis, The Phantom, X-Men, Charlie Chaplin, The Cisco Kid, Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Laurel & Hardy, Howdy Doody, Planet of the Apes, MAD, Hopalong Cassidy, Captain America, Toy Guns and more! Many rare and one-of-a-kind collectibles are included in the new, expanded and updated listings. A new checklist feature has also been added! All this and more! Available from Collector Books, Gemstone Publishing & Diamond Comic Distributors - Diamond product # MAY001607.

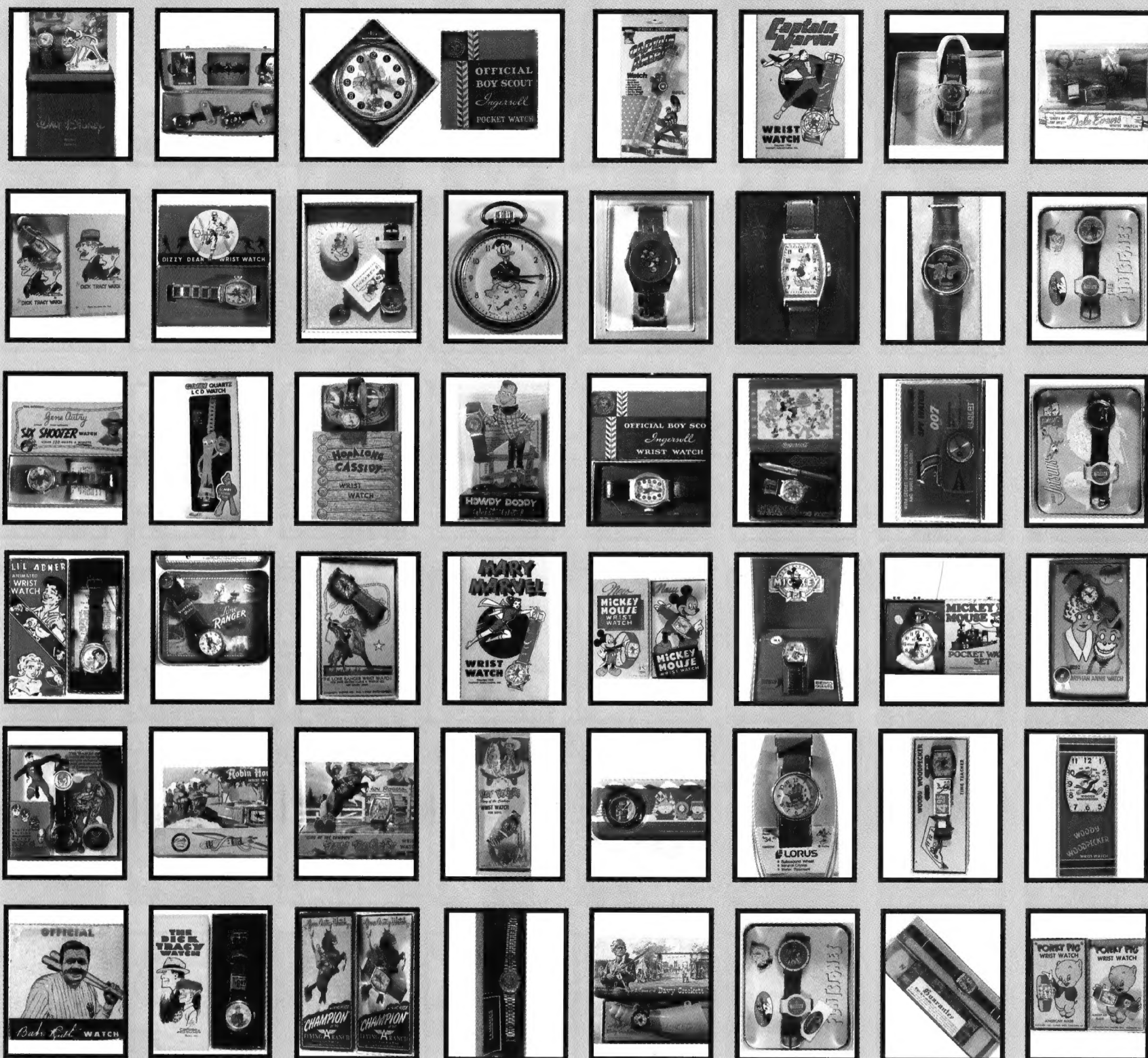
To Order By Phone Call Toll Free (888) 375-9800 ext. 249

Gemstone Publishing, Inc. • 1966 Greenspring Drive • Timonium, MD 21093

Tel: (410) 560-5806 • Fax (410) 560-7143 • E-Mail fancussrv@gemstonepub.com

Visa, MasterCard, Checks & Money Orders Accepted. Please add \$7.00 S&H for the 1st book and \$3.00 for each additional book. CA, MD & MO residents must add applicable sales tax.

SEE HOW MUCH THEY'RE WORTH!



!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOW AVAILABLE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

NEW Larger Format! • 8.5" x 11" • 10,000 Photo illustrations! • 360 Unique Categories! • Watches! • Comics! • Badges! 928 Pages! • NEW Checklist feature! • NEW Color Section!

**The Definitive Visual Guide and Checklist™
HAKE'S PRICE GUIDE TO CHARACTER TOYS**
The Brand New Third Edition! • \$35 (+S&H)

It's all in here! X-Men, Charlie Chaplin, The Cisco Kid, Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Laurel & Hardy, Howdy Doody, Planet of the Apes, MAD, Hopalong Cassidy, Captain America, Toy Guns, Toy Story, Uncle Scrooge, Pokémon, Small Soldiers, Superhero Resins, Batman, Muhammad Ali, Disneyana, Superman, Spider-Man, Roy Rogers, Buck Rogers, KISS, Mickey Mouse, The Lone Ranger, Puppet Master, Elvis, The Phantom, and more! Many rare and one-of-a-kind collectibles are included in the new, expanded and updated listings. A new checklist feature has also been added! All this and more! Available from Collector Books, Gemstone Publishing & Diamond Comic Distributors - Diamond product # MAY001607.

To Order By Phone Call Toll Free (888) 375-9800 ext. 249

Gemstone Publishing, Inc. • 1966 Greenspring Drive • Timonium, MD 21093

Tel: (410) 560-5806 • Fax (410) 560-7143 • E-Mail fancussrv@gemstonepub.com

Visa, MasterCard, Checks & Money Orders Accepted. Please add \$7.00 S&H for the 1st book and \$3.00 for each additional book. CA, MD & MO residents must add applicable sales tax.

SEE HOW MUCH THEY'RE WORTH!



!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOW AVAILABLE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

NEW Larger Format! • 8.5" x 11" • 10,000 Photo Illustrations! • 360 Unique Categories! • Big Little Books! • Cereal Boxes! • Posters! 928 Pages! • NEW Checklist feature! • NEW Color Section!

**The Definitive Visual Guide and Checklist™
HAKE'S PRICE GUIDE TO CHARACTER TOYS
The Brand New Third Edition! • \$35 (+S&H)**

It's all in here! Toy Story, Uncle Scrooge, Pokémon, Small Soldiers, Superhero Resins, Batman, Muhammad Ali, Disneyana, Superman, Spider-Man, Roy Rogers, Buck Rogers, KISS, Mickey Mouse, The Lone Ranger, Puppet Master, Elvis, The Phantom, X-Men, Charlie Chaplin, The Cisco Kid, Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Laurel & Hardy, Howdy Doody, Planet of the Apes, MAD, Hopalong Cassidy, Captain America, Toy Guns and more! Many rare and one-of-a-kind collectibles are included in the new, expanded and updated listings. A new checklist feature has also been added! All this and more! Available from Collector Books, Gemstone Publishing & Diamond Comic Distributors - Diamond product # MAY001607.

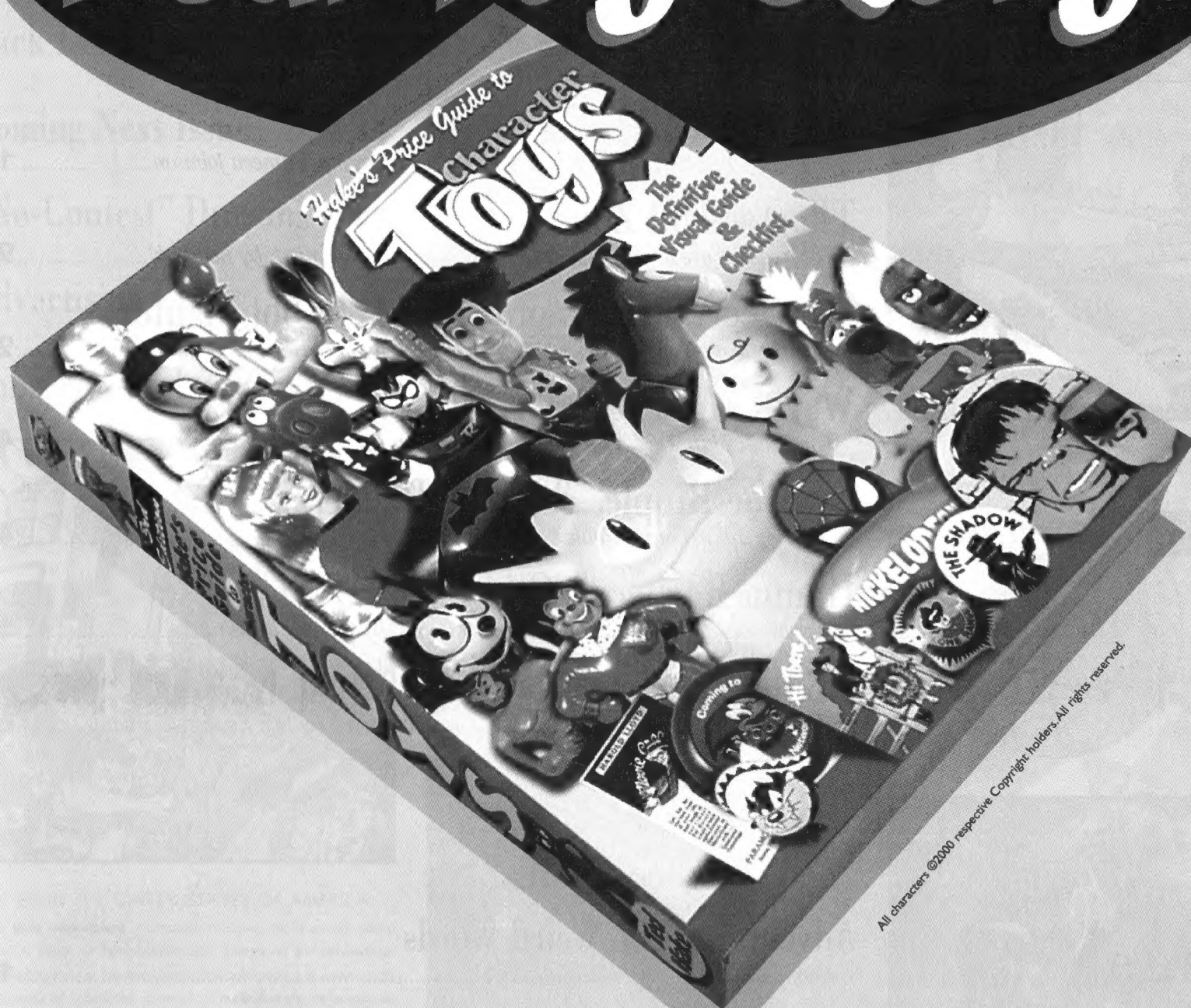
To Order By Phone Call Toll Free (888) 375-9800 ext. 249

Gemstone Publishing, Inc. • 1966 Greenspring Drive • Timonium, MD 21093

Tel: (410) 560-5806 • Fax (410) 560-7143 • E-Mail fancussrv@gemstonepub.com

Visa, MasterCard, Checks & Money Orders Accepted. Please add \$7.00 S&H for the 1st book and \$3.00 for each additional book. CA, MD & MO residents must add applicable sales tax.

Check out the Real Toy Story!



All characters ©2000 respective Copyright holders. All rights reserved.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOW AVAILABLE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

NEW Larger Format! • 8.5" x 11" • 10,000 Photo illustrations! • 360 Unique Categories! • Rings! • Plush Dolls! • Masks! • 928 Pages! • NEW Checklist feature! • NEW Color Section!

The Definitive Visual Guide and Checklist™
HAKE'S PRICE GUIDE TO CHARACTER TOYS
 The Brand New Third Edition! • \$35 (+S&H)

It's all in here! X-Men, Charlie Chaplin, The Cisco Kid, Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Laurel & Hardy, Howdy Doody, Planet of the Apes, MAD, Hopalong Cassidy, Captain America, Toy Guns, Toy Story, Uncle Scrooge, Pokémon, Small Soldiers, Superhero Resins, Batman, Muhammad Ali, Disneyana, Superman, Spider-Man, Roy Rogers, Buck Rogers, KISS, Mickey Mouse, The Lone Ranger, Puppet Master, Elvis, The Phantom, and more! Many rare and one-of-a-kind collectibles are included in the new, expanded and updated listings. A new checklist feature has also been added! All this and more! Available from Collector Books, Gemstone Publishing & Diamond Comic Distributors - Diamond product # MAY001607.

To Order By Phone Call Toll Free (888) 375-9800 ext. 249

Gemstone Publishing, Inc. • 1966 Greenspring Drive • Timonium, MD 21093

Tel: (410) 560-5806 • Fax (410) 560-7143 • E-Mail fancussrv@gemstonepub.com

Visa, MasterCard, Checks & Money Orders Accepted. Please add \$7.00 S&H for the 1st book and \$3.00 for each additional book. CA, MD & MO residents must add applicable sales tax.



C O N T E N T S

NUMBER **83** Nov. 2000

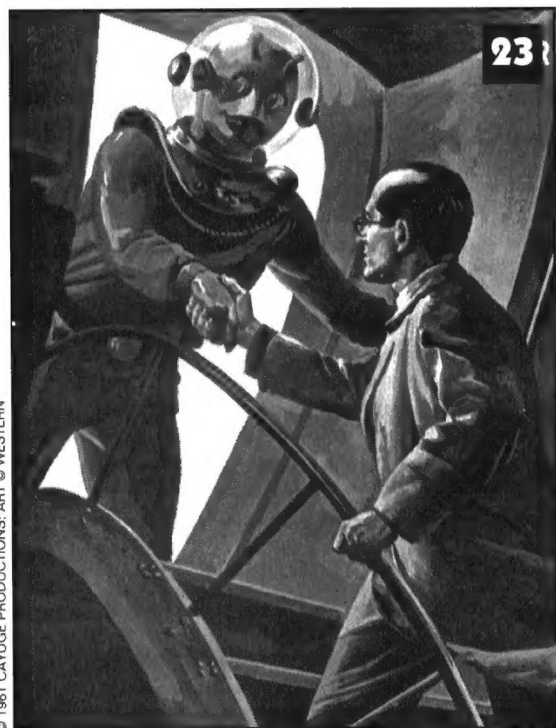


© 2000 DC



18

© 2000 DC



23

FEATURES

Saturn Girl!

The many masks of Legion leader, Imra Ardeen! by Mark Ameen Johnson..... **18**

The Twilight Zone!

These comics are as vast as space and as timeless as infinity! by Bob Kubl..... **23**

The Secret Origin of Magnus, Robot Fighter!

A new look at Gold Key's Silver Sci-Fi hero! by Will Murray..... **28**

World's Weirdest Hero!

For Plastic Man, DC stands for Definitely Confusing! by Jack Abramowitz..... **45**

Of Glue Ripples & Spine Puckers!

Grading squarebound comic books! by Bill Howard..... **49**

Hanna-Barbera's Odd Format Comics!

Western's wild format experiments in 1961-62! by Murray R. Ward..... **52**

CBM's Fanzine Showcase

The newest Bronze Age fanzine...The O'Neil Observer! by Bob Brodsky & friends..... **66**

COLUMNS

Adventures Into Weird Words

Heroic One-Shots! by Pat S. Calhoun..... **13**

Nolan's Notebook

Secondary publishers of primary interest! by Michelle Nolan..... **15**

The Naiman Report

Disinter-what? by Michael Naiman..... **56**

CBM MarketWatch

A sample of market indicator sales! by Michael Naiman..... **57**

The Schiffman Report

Where have all the Timelys gone? by Matt Schiffman..... **59**

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the Editor	8
Marketplace Mail	10
Back Issue Dept.	10
Coming Next Issue	14
"No-Contest" Drawing	51
Advertising Info.	61
Subscription Info	62



PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Comic Book Marketplace – Gemstone Publishing, Inc. copyright ©2000 Stephen A. Geppi, all rights reserved under international and Pan-American copyright conventions. The information in this publication is protected under U.S. copyright law. Absolutely no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form whatsoever (including mechanically, photographically, and/or electronically), without the prior written consent of the publisher. All articles and columns are the express opinion of the individual contributing artists and authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Gemstone Publishing, Comic Book Marketplace, its staff, or its advertisers. All characters, names, logos, trademarks, and symbols depicted and/or described in articles and other editorial material are owned and copyrighted by their individual companies. Inquiries regarding this publication (including advertising) and letters to the editor should be addressed to: Comic Book Marketplace, c/o Gemstone Publishing, Inc. (West), P.O. Box 180700, Coronado, CA 92178-0700, telephone (619) 437-1996 FAX (619) 437-1993. 12 issue 1st class subscription \$60 (residents of Missouri and Maryland add applicable sales tax); \$62 (Canada and Mexico, US funds); \$110 (United Kingdom and Western Europe, US funds); \$120 (Japan and Philippines, US funds). Advertising and subscription rates may change without notice. **Issue Number #83, November 2000**



© WESTERN PUBLISHING

The Return of the Mummy!

This issue's look back at Dell and Gold Key's *Twilight Zone* comics brought back a flood of memories. By the early 1960s, I was more conversant about *Twilight Zone* episodes and comic books than US history. That's when a strange twist of fate brought those two worlds together for me.

It happened on one of our regular treks up the coast from San Diego to Hollywood. Pat Calhoun, my brother Lane, and I were making our regular rounds... Bond Street Book Store, Collector's Book Store... when we arrived at Bert Blum's "loft" on the second floor of the now-famous Cherokee Book Shop.

When we got to Cherokee, the "usuals" were in attendance. Chuck McCleary and Rick Durrell (the only nice-to-kids-comic-book-collecting adults we'd ever met) were looking through several boxes of Golden Age MLJ. Bert was sitting behind his long folding table, decked out in t-shirt and jeans.

"Where should I put these boxes?" a seventh unknown and younger voice asked Burt from a corner.

I whirled, surveyed a young boy's face, and instantly recognized him. "My god!" I thought, "It's the kid from *Twilight Zone*!"

An incredibly young and seemingly frail Billy Mumy stood before me, looked up at smiled. "Hello" he said with positive regard.

"I've seen you on *Twilight Zone*!" I blurted out in a loud voice... "hey Laaaane, Paaat... this is the kid from *Twilight Zone*!"

Although Billy had appeared in several TZ episodes, two of my favorite in which he starred instantly flashed across my brain. My second favorite featured Billy talking to his deceased Grandmother on a toy phone. But my favorite (in fact one of my all-time favorite in the entire run of the show) cameoed Billy as a villainous spoiled child with God-like mental powers that could cause any horrible, deforming death he could imagine. The unique horror of being turned into a life-size jack-in-the-box and being "wished to the corn field" afterwards by a "cute" little boy is still one of the series highlights.

I thought "but wait... this is a Hollywood star... and that means he's got all the money he wants to buy all the comics he wants! Why is he doing odd jobs for Burt?"

After a little small talk with Billy it turned out that I liked him right away. Instead of being a stuck up child star with delusions of grandeur (and too much money) as one might have expected, young Master Mumy turned out to be (amazingly, and to the credit of his parents) just like any other regular kid I'd ever met. He even explained that he had to work to get the extra money to buy comics for his collection... because he was on a strict allowance that was less than mine!

Billy further impressed me by his collecting tastes that day. No 1950's or 1960's Silver Age for this kid... he collected Golden Age for pete's sake! For my money, that's one future-thinking and enlightened elementary school kid.

Years went by. *Twilight Zone* and *Lost In Space* came and went on TV... and then I lost track of him. Then during the 1970s at a San Diego Con we met again. I was selling a few Golden Age dupes at our table when Bill walked up and reintroduced himself to me. We reminisced about how much we both missed Burt and those wonderful Saturdays buying books up in his loft. Billy even picked out a few Golden Age DC issues from our back board.

We laughed together about the "good old days" when Golden Age comics were just a few buck each. Then Bill made his offer.

I hesitated, but then relented. As he walked away from the table with his new books, he looked back with that infectious smile of his and laughingly said "It's a good thing you took my offer... now I won't have to wish you out into the corn field!"

Bill never knew that for a lifelong *Twilight Zone* fan like me... it would have been an honor.



Comic Book MARKETPLACE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Gary M. Carter

ART DIRECTOR

Lisa M. Carter

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Pat S. Calhoun

MARKET REPORT COORDINATOR

Michael Naiman

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Scotty Moore • Phil Barnhart

COPY EDITOR

Beth Holley

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

Joe McGuckin • Mike Wilbur

MAGAZINE CONSULTANT

Bill Howard

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Arnie Sawyer • Joe Sikoryak

MARKETING DIRECTOR

J. C. Vaughn

E-MAIL ADDRESS

cbm@gemstonepub.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS AND ARTISTS

Jack Abramowitz • Murphy Anderson
Stephen Barrington • Martin Bartolomeo
Jon Berk • Dave Blanchard • Steven Blasi
Bob Brodsky • Michael Browning • Jim Campos
Gary Colabuono • Steve Cooper • Jack Curtin
Sterling Dashiell • Duane Dimock • John Dinan
Rich Donnelly • Donald Ensign • John Fallon
Brian Faraci • Creig Flessel • Gene Gallatin
Jeff Gelb • Stephen H. Gentner • Tony Gleeson
Shawn Hamilton • Kevin Hanley • Mark Haspel
Roger Hill • Terry Hoknes • Rick Holley
Carl Horak • M. Thomas Inge
Mark Ameen Johnson • Jim Kealy • Peter Klee
Chris Knowles • Patrick Kochanek • Bob Kuhl
Chris Lambert • Aaron Manson • Jon McClure
Robert J. McKinnon • Lou Mougin • Will Murray
Christopher Nelson • Matt Nelson
Michelle Nolan • Charlie Roberts • Arlen Schumer
Tony Seybert • Carl Weed

EDITORS EMERITUS

Will Eisner • Stan Lee • Julie Schwartz
Vincent Sullivan • Al Feldstein



Gary

DC

\$100 PRIZE CONTEST "How I Met My Boyfriend"

100-PAGE SUPER SPECTACULAR

LOVE STORIES



I MAY BE
RUINING MY
LIFE... BUT I
CAN'T HELP
MYSELF!

MY SHAMEFUL
PAST!

A FULL-LENGTH
NOVELETTE!
COMPLETE IN
THIS ISSUE!

Made for Love!

MY SISTER
STOLE
MY MAN!

SPECIAL!
TED LONG
OF THE
TODAY SHOW
TELLS YOU

ONE HUNDRED PAGES
OF HEARTBREAK,
ROMANCE AND LOVE.

HOW TO BE
FABULOUS!

Read one girl's
shocking story..

*The WRONG
KIND of LOVE!*

IF BIG STORIES

100 PAGES! THE BIGGEST LOVE MAG EVER



© DC Comics © 2000. All Rights Reserved.

A RARELY-SEEN CLASSIC COMES BACK TO COMICS SHOPS THIS JANUARY

CALL 1-888-COMIC BOOK FOR YOUR NEAREST COMICS SHOP!

cbm back issue department



\$7.50 each (we pay the postage!)

- #47 Russ Heath, Capt. Storm, Haunted Tank!
- #50 Julius Schwartz, Captain Comet, etc.
- #51 Al Williamson, Julie Schwartz Part III
- #53 Al Feldstein, George Evans, New Fun!
- #52 Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox
- #57 Superboy, Curt Swan, Fiction House, more!
- #58 Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton!
- #60 Planet Comics & Reed Crandall
- #62 Joe Simon, Fighting American, Dobie Gillis
- #63 Celebrating Superman's 60th!
- #64 X-Men, Doom Patrol, Metal Men, Fanzines
- #65 Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane, & more!
- #66 Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven!
- #67 Spidey & Stan (alt cover only)
- #68 Planet of the Apes
- #70 Batman: Neal Adams/Jerry Robinson
- #72 Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber (Part I)
- #73 Warren Horror, Larry Lieber (Part II)
- #76 Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton
- #79 Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Capt. Action
- #80 Special 96-Page EC Tribute issue
- #81 Doctor Strange, Iron Man, all Marvel issue!

\$12 each (we pay the postage!)

- #74 Gil Kane, Green Lantern, Gerber Sticker Set #2, 80 pages
- #75 Special Anniversary Issue, C. Infantino, Gerber Sticker Set #3, 120 BIG pages!

Add \$2 each for Overseas orders
CA, MO, & MD residents add sales tax
MCMISA orders: (619) 437-1996

CBM BACK ISSUES
P.O. BOX 180700
Coronado • CA • 92178-0700



Wrong cover pictured

Just today I received the hard to find "Treasury of Comics" #4 (Abbie an' Slat's) from an eBay purchase and noticed in the Photo Journal that the picture of #1 of Treasury is the same photo Gerber used for Abbie an' Slat's #1. Checking the latest copy of Overstreet he has a photo of Treasury exactly like the one from Gerber. Do they both have the same cover? I don't own Treasury #1 but I do own Abbie #1 which I'll check tomorrow (when I get to my storeroom).

Another book that has the wrong cover pictured is Jane Arden #2. Gerber used "Paget of Comics" #2 for the photo. I own the actual Jane Arden #2 and the cover isn't the same.

Got the latest CBM today and I don't care for the illustrated "Captain Bill". Use the space for an article on golden age books.

Gary Watson, via Email

Wrong Abbie an Slat's

Well checking my copies of Abbie an Slat's and Treasury of Comics I find this: Abbie an Slat's #1 (indicia) was published in March 1948 but has #2 on the cover! Its the same copy as #2 pictured in Gerber and if you look close it has #2 up in the rt. corner but the indicia says #1. What I had listed in my list as #1 turned out to be Treasury of Comics #1 (no date) as pictured in Gerber as both Abbie #1 and Treasury #1. Treasury has the character sitting on a log in a park with the grandparents behind a tree in the back. My copy of Abbie #3 corresponds with the photo in Gerber and is dated June 1948. I think Gerber confused Treasury with Abbie #1 as I did. Has any CBM reader ever seen a copy of #1 and #4 (which isn't pictured)?

Gary Watson, via Email

Marvel round-bounds

Say, Gary... I was so baffled by Marvel's four round bounds that they put out in late 1971 that I tried to solve the puzzle and I did as far as I can tell! If one looks at all four round bounds the answer to the puzzle is quite simple.

The answer to this Marvel puzzle is in the cover dates on each round bound issue Marvel published. For example Monsters On The Prowl #13 is cover dated the month of October!, My Love #14 is cover dated the month of November!, Mighty Marvel Western #15 is cover dated the month of December!, and can you guess the cover month date of Captain America Special #2? Yes! its cover dated the month of January as one might guess!

Four different Marvel round bound issues with four different cover month dates! I think its quite clear and plain to see that Marvel was indeed experimenting with the round bound format that DC! at the time was using and they experimented wisely by using non regular series issues! to experiment with.

I shared my discovery with Jon McClure and he agreed hands down that Marvel definitely was experimenting due to four different cover date months on the four different round bound issues that Marvel produced(it was not by chance they all had different cover month dates that's for sure). Where is my No Prize? for solving this puzzle as the former great Marvel editor Stan Lee might say.

Bill Alexander, California

Comic dreams... & nightmares!

I thought I would write in again. (the last letter I wrote was published in CBM #16, a classic!) Your recent editor's column about the old lady with the comics in her attic reminded me of a very recent experience I had. An experience that demonstrates the dark side of the collecting mind.

This experience closely mimicked the many comic dreams/nightmares I have had in my life. By that, I mean the kind of dreams where you stumble upon a cache of beautiful unread mint golden age comics when some kindly old man tells you can have them for 1/2 cover price. Then as you're piling up stacks of More Fun's, All Americans, and Marvel Mystery's you suddenly wake up and realize once again, it's only a dream. Well that dream came true for me recently only it was also part nightmare as I had to make the cruelest

(Continued on page 62)

B
O
W
E
ND
E
S
I
G
N
S

HAWKEYE MINI BUST

Coming Soon!!!

\$39.99

B
O
W
E
ND
E
S
I
G
N
S

GRENDL CHRISTINE SPAR STATUE

\$149.95

SPIDERMAN and GREEN GOBLIN

Mini Bust

\$39.99 each

or Order
Both and
Save!



BEST COMICS PRESENTS... "EXCLUSIVE" GREY VERSION MR. FIXIT

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

• Sculpted By
Bowen Designs

• Fully Licensed
By Marvel

• Mini Bust
• Strictly LMTD. to 2,500

• Measuring 7" High
• Fully Painted



\$44.95

Available Jan. 2001
Order Yours Now!!!



We Buy Your Old Statues
Old Comics And Toys!!
Call Or Email Us For Special Pricing!!

We Will Meet or Beat Any
Advertised Print Ad Price
*No Internet Auctions. Must Present Copy of Ad at Payment.

B
O
W
E
N
D
E
S
I
G
N
S

SUE STORM



FF

INVISIBLE WOMAN PAINTED STATUE

\$150.

Clear Variant Version
\$140.

SHE'S HOT!!!
MATCH HER WITH
DAREDEVIL
STATUE!!!

BLACK WIDOW AVENGERS STATUE

\$150.



XMEN DARK PHOENIX STATUE

\$175.

Regular Phoenix
\$165.



Still Available!!!

HARD HERO ENTERPRISES STATUES

CONAN STATUE

Reg. \$199/Sale \$149.95

RED SONJA STATUE

Reg. \$199/Sale \$149.95

KING KULL STATUE

Reg. \$199/Sale \$149.95



TM & ©2000 Conan Properties Inc. All rights reserved.

Largest East Coast Distributor of Statues!

TM & ©2000 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved.

BEST COMICS & HOBBY CENTER

We Will
Ship
Anywhere

252-02 Northern Blvd., Little Neck, NY 11362
Phone: (718) 279-2099 • Fax: (718) 279-2216

<http://www.bestcomics.com>

Hours: Mon. - Sat. 10:00 to 8:00 • Sunday 11:00 to 5:00

Over 30 Years
Experience

Shipping & Handling
\$12.50 per Statue
\$6.50 per Bust

C
O
D
EM
O
N
E
YM
A
S
T
E
RV
I
S
A

Sold.

That is all you will be able to say when you are dealing with Harley Yee. My prices paid out are among the highest. You are always able to receive cash immediately. There is no collection that is too small because I will travel anywhere to view your collection.

I have over 14 years experience and I'm also a senior advisor to the *Overstreet Price Guide*. You will always receive prompt, professional service. I specialize in the Golden and Silver Age.

HARLEY YEE

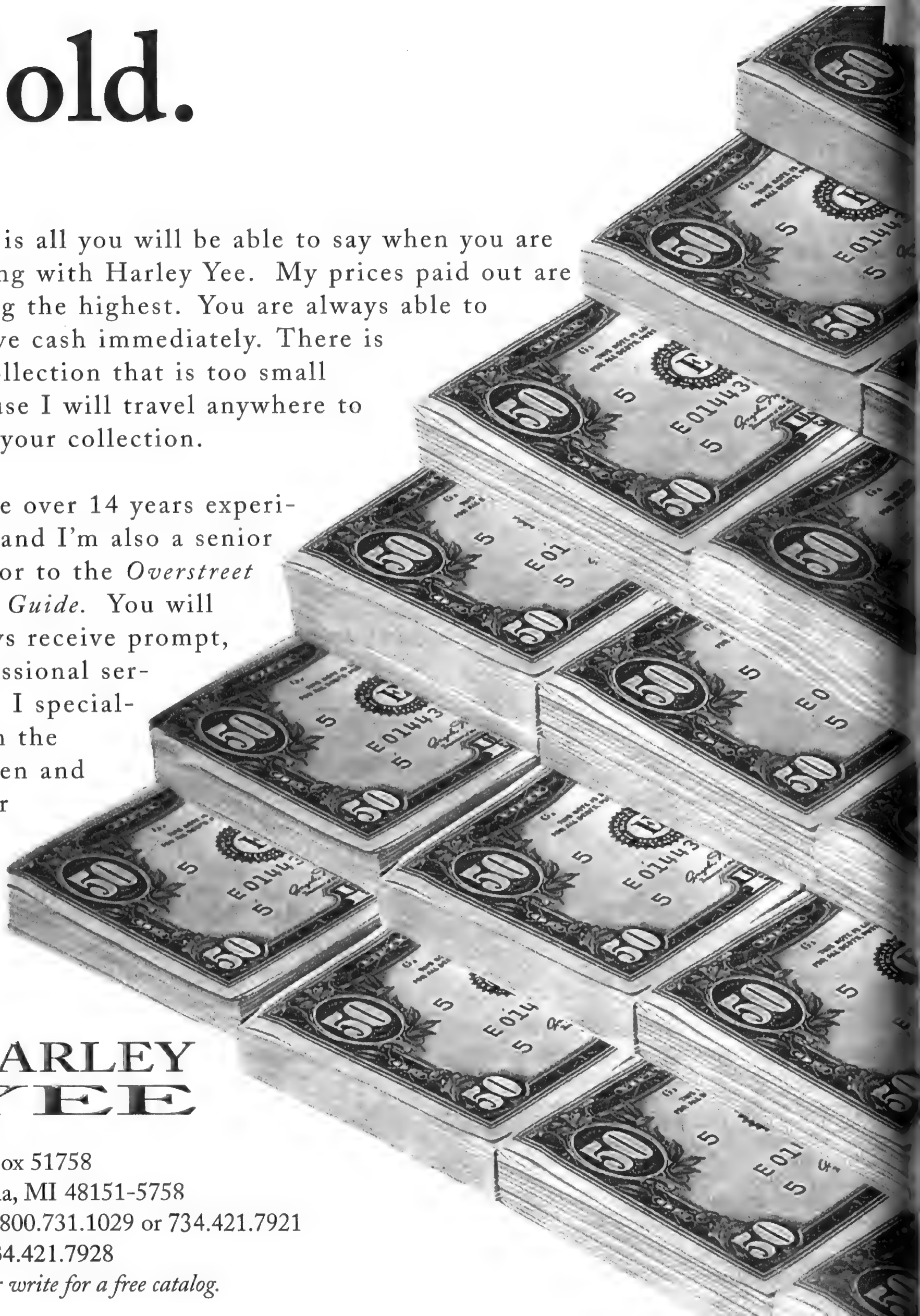
P.O. Box 51758

Livonia, MI 48151-5758

voice: 800.731.1029 or 734.421.7921

fax: 734.421.7928

Call or write for a free catalog.



Heroic One-Shots!

By Pat S. Calhoun



It is perhaps ironic that the early 1950s, the biggest and (presumably) best years of comic books, fell in between the two heroic "ages" that are usually the focus of collecting interest. But even though the Atom Age didn't produce an abundance of heroes, there were so many comics of all kinds that a fair number of heroic characters did come and go. Here we will celebrate three heroes who came and went in the same issue.

Son of Sinbad #1 (February 1950) looks good, and the character and concept are both fine, but the stories don't rise to the occasion and lack the fantasy element the title seems to promise. It's too bad, because Joe Kubert's art was certainly up to the task, and if the writing hadn't faltered the comic could have been a hit instead of a one-shot.

The cover is fabulous, and if there's no fantasy element the woman who needs rescuing is fantastic enough. The introduction tale gives little in the way of origin other than the tie-in with his legendary father: it seems mostly to be a formula framework for a lot of nice Kubert staging. A menaced maiden again steals the show—a slave-girl well worth saving. It's not that a great comic can't be made of such material; but it just doesn't happen here.

The second Son of Sinbad story, "The Curse of the Caliph's Dancer," is another mediocre adven-

ture with Kubert striving to make the weak script wonderful, but it can't be done. This is still a fun comic, and Kubert certainly handles the graphics with flair. But the cool concept and art—with better writing—would have been terrific.

The back-ups, Omar of the Magic Robes and a third Son of Sinbad (not by Kubert), suffer the same fate as the two lead tales. Although the book is a one-shot, there is another Son of Sinbad Kubert yarn...amazingly... in *Abbott and Costello* #10. Both titles come courtesy of St. John, one of the many publishers who rose up at the start of the Atomic Age and sank down at the end of it.

From the Arabian Nights past to the interplanetary future isn't such a great leap for a fantasy fan. Besides, *Rocketman* #1 (June 1952) stretched backwards as well as forwards, featuring art of such pure 1930's style that one wonders (as Michelle Nolan posited) if the stories weren't from some unused inventory dating way back. Otherwise it's almost surely the work of an older artist, trained in an older school. There are spots here and there where "Rocketman" seems to have been re-lettered over something else, so anything's possible, especially since the publisher, Farrell, made a habit of buying inventory from defunct companies.

This book is as funky as it is charming. The stories are readable in a "don't ask me what happened five minutes later" sort of way, but this "had to be a one-shot" item doesn't ask you to come to it with high expectations. A round of low-key wallowing in grade-B space opera is the appeal *Rocketman* offers and delivers.

In the opening tale *Rocketman* routs a bunch of bat-winged marauders from the mountains of Mercury. In the second story Venus mysteriously (well, it's never explained why) erupts into flame, and the population flees in rockets

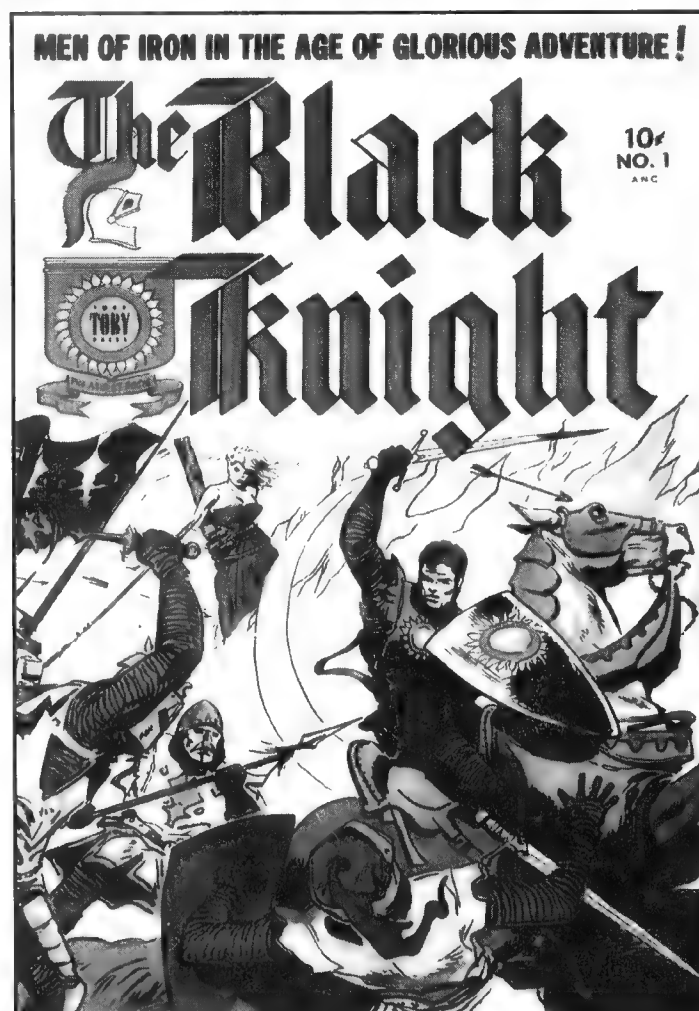
***The Black Knight* #1 (May 1953), a superb historical effort from Toby, features cover and story art by Ernie Schroeder who at this time had just finished a long run drawing Hillman's *Airboy* and *The Heap*.**

but are captured and enslaved by Martians. *Rocketman* helps a Venusian bring his pet dinosaur to Mars to stomp and gore their captors and win freedom for his people.

Then comes a back-up yarn that looks more 1940s than 1930s, with a character called Cosmo who crash-lands on a planetoid just in time to help the locals overthrow their dictator, Molak. The third *Rocketman* story wraps things up, "Panic on Pluto." *Rocketman* is on Saturn when he finds out that their king has been kidnapped on Pluto. He flies there and is brought before Morono, king of the idiots. The poor Plutonians lack brains so they capture intelligent people and hook them up to a machine that distributes the victim's brain power amongst them. They've hooked up Saturn's ruler, but once *Rocketman* frees him the Plutonians become mindless and are easy to defeat... It's nonsense, but somehow quite amusing...

Our third entry, *The Black Knight* #1 (May 1953), hails from another "boom years" publisher, Toby. These are gritty and realistic stories of a knight returning from the Crusades and fighting to recover his stolen land. Ernie Schroeder provided an excellent cover and interior art. The first yarn has Sir Robert, the Black Knight, enlisting in

© MEG



the service of Baron de Greyc to fight against the Duke of Kirkchester who holds 100 acres of Sir Robert's land. The only problem is that the Baron follows the counsel of a druid priest who is secretly in league with Kirkchester. When the Baron's daughter falls for the Black Knight the jealous priest tells the Baron that they will be crushed unless she is offered as a human sacrifice. Now it is up to Sir Robert to save her, prove the priest a traitor, and lead the battle against Kirkchester. It's a rousing 11-pager....

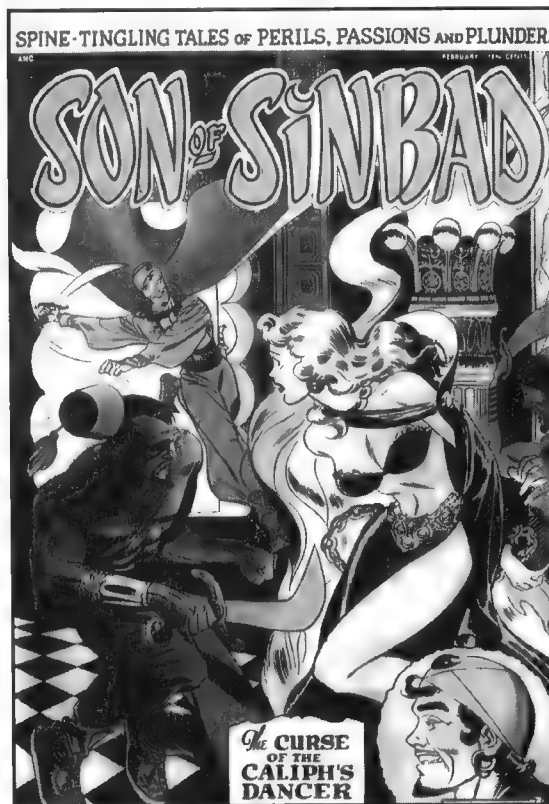
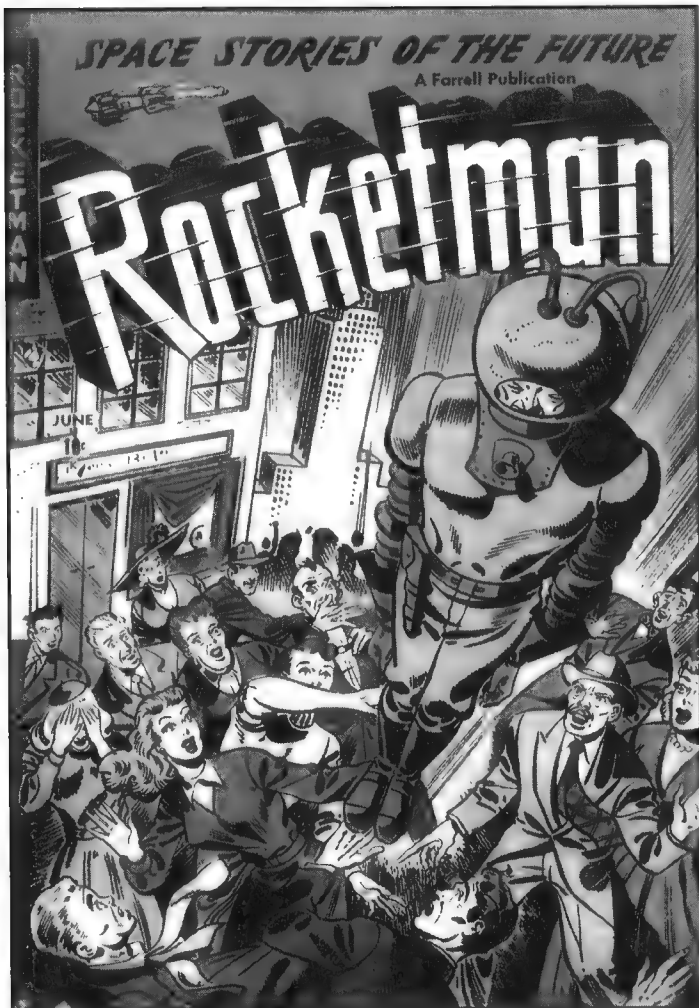
In the second tale Sir Robert rounds up his own army so he can fight to win back his castle. But the Earl of Gunstan plants a couple of paid assassins in the ranks,

swordsman Jacques and seductress Rosita. She slips poison into the Black Knight's drink, but relents and fights Jacques off from the kill long enough for Sir Robert to regain his senses. The knight comes to just in time to stop the faithless Jacques from turning murderously on his partner in a scene charged with sleazy sexual tension.

The third story is a little slimmer, with Sir Robert searching for an old friend and finding him not so friendly. It's an adequate 5-pager that neither adds to or diminishes the impact of the two longer tales that preceded it. And they are fine enough to make this rate as a first-class book of historical adventure.

In these days of endless sequels and series it's refreshing to read a comic that stands on its own. And these three books—all the products of smaller publishers—added their unique richness to the most diverse era in comics history. 

© AVON



The standard early 1950's science fiction cover on *Rocketman* #1 (Jun 1952) masks an interior that may have been produced in the late 1930s! There have been several characters called Rocketman but this is probably the only one who didn't fly around with a rocket pack.

The smiling hero arrives just in time to rescue a luscious young lady from a very hot spot on the dynamic cover of *Son of Sinbad* #1 (Feb 1950) by the first of the great "second generation" (raised on comics) artists, Joe Kubert.

COMING
Attractions
IN CBM

CBM Special Edition #5 features *A collector's bonanza of* **WILL MURRAY MYSTERIES!**

Plus: un-published Will Murray articles!
An exclusive Will Murray interview!
and *more* Gerber White-Space Stickers!

Secondary publishers of primary interest!

Lev Gleason and Standard produced sparkling romances!

By Michelle Nolan



For nearly two decades, Lev Gleason and Standard were secondary comic book publishers of primary interest, especially to collectors of 1950's romance titles.

Gleason published only 98 romance comics and Standard produced just 111, but both employed enough different artists and styles to be collectible.

Although romance comics tend to be repetitive on the surface, it's the minor differences that make the different companies so appealing to many collectors.

Most of the companies, primary and secondary alike, had a distinct feel to both their covers and interior art, with Gleason and Standard typical in their differences. In fact, if the titles and publisher logos were taken off of the romance comics from more than two dozen companies, veteran collectors still could identify the quirks that created indi-

vidual identities for almost all of the firms that published the vast majority of romance comics.

If you already collected typical examples of romance comics from a dozen or more companies, you can have some fun if you'll line up one or two of each on the floor. You'll be astonished at how many different ways publishers found to present romance comics.

In fact, I've always been fascinated at the many styles that publishers used to design their comics during both the Golden Age and the Atom Age.

Lev Gleason Publications, of course, is best known as the creator of the crime comics genre, beginning with *Crime Does Not Pay* #22 (the first issue) in 1942. Gleason published only a handful of comics at any one time including two high-caliber romance titles—*Boy Meets Girl* (later *Boy Loves Girl*) #1-57 and *Lovers' Lane* #1-41.

Those two romance comics, along with *Crime Does Not Pay*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Daredevil*, *Boy Illustories*, and *Black Diamond Western*, were all long-running, successful titles throughout much of the history of the company, which went out of business in 1956.

The two romance titles tended to follow the typically gritty Gleason formula, as practiced by longtime editors Charles Biro and Bob Wood throughout much of Gleason's publishing history. The company's stories in all genres were among the wordiest and most densely plotted in all of comics, sometimes hampering the full expression of the artists.

Lovers' Lane #1 (October 1949), the first Gleason romance comic, and *Boy Meets Girl* #1 (February 1950) were among the few in the industry to display the line "Not Intended for Children" on the cover in an early attempt at labeling. Ironically, however, the two Gleason titles were not nearly as controversial or sleazy as many of their counterparts, other than for a few issues.

The label "Not Intended for Children" did not last long on the covers, running only on the first five issues of each. Oddly, it was still running on the cover of *Boy Meets Girl* #4 and 5 at the same time it was not on the covers of *Lovers' Lane* #6 and 7.

It's fascinating to note that not only were Lev

Gleason's artists usually allowed to sign their work, but the company used printed art credits as part of the splash pages in the first few issues of both titles—long before such credits became standard in comics. By 1951, though, the credits were gone, although many of the stories were signed.

Gleason employed a variety of highly competent veteran illustrators. Credits in early issues included Jerry Grandenetti, Fred Kida, Bob Fuje, Fred Guardineer, William Overgaard, Bob Lubbers, Jack Sparling, George Tuska, Ruth Atkinson, Bill Walton, Dick Briefer, and Al Borth—a lineup of which any company could be proud.

The first two issues of *Lovers' Lane* had line-drawn covers by Biro. With the first issue of *Boy Meets Girl*, which corresponded with *Lovers' Lane* #3 (February 1950), Gleason began a series of truly striking painted covers, many by high-caliber Golden Age artist Bob Fuje (many more than listed in the *Overstreet Price Guide*) and others by the lesser-known Herb Tauss and a cou-



Strong story lines and "dreamy" painted covers, like the one on *Boy Meets Girl* #9 (Mar 1951), abound on early Lev Gleason comics

ple of other artists. These wonderful painted covers included traditional scenes of romance along with several with whimsical or "dreamy" themes.

For example, the cover of *Boy Meets Girl* #9 (March 1951) features a close-up of a girl taking a phone call with a huge smile while her date stands puzzled in the doorway. The cover-featured story? "Keep 'Em Guessing." Indeed!

The cute Fudge cover of *Boy Meets Girl* #15 (September 1951) features a startled girl on a couch, a lipstick-smeared boy, and the girl's

knew, but I couldn't forget Al's dark, dangerous passion, even when Roger held me in his arms." Shades of Wertham!

Following the title change, *Boy Loves Girl* used exclusively line-drawn covers, marking the title's third cover style since issue #1. Unlike the idealistic covers of *Boy Meets Girl* #1-18, the far grittier covers of *Boy Loves Girl* more often than not featured a girl cheating on her boyfriend. One of the most striking examples was the cover of #45 (April 1954), portraying an angry man shining a flashlight on a couple in a front seat, countryside clinch.

The Comics Code obviously ended the cover themes of cheating women. In stark contrast, the last few issues of *Boy Loves Girl* usually featured "wholesome" themes of love.

The cover of #56 (February 1956) featured the banner lines "More Exciting Than a Movie—More Thrilling Than TV." This plea to readers told the tale of why so many comics were gradually fading in popularity. Appropriately enough, the Gleason romance series ended with #57 (July 1956), on which the

same words were relegated to small type in the bottom left-hand corner. It was almost as though the publisher himself knew the words rang hollow.

Gleason apparently felt the romance market was overextended even before the Comics Code came in, since he ended *Lovers' Lane* with #41 (July 1954). *Lovers' Lane* followed the same cover patterns as *Boy Meets/Loves Girl*—from dreamy to seamy.

There's an exceptional whimsical Fudge cover on *Lovers' Lane* #14 (July 1951), with a couple sparking on a bench as an elderly woman smiles slyly in the background. It's truly work worthy of Norman Rockwell.

It is amazing that only one year later, in *Lovers' Lane* #26 (July 1952), the same title featured a startling photo cover of a hairy-chested man cuddling with a woman in a low-cut red dress about to kiss. The contrast in the two covers, published only a year apart, is nothing less than startling! *Lovers' Lane* #28 (September 1952) followed up with the lead story "Shabby Angel, the Story of a Bad Girl..."

Interestingly, the cover of *Lovers' Lane* #33 (March 1953) was a photo of a wholesome looking couple on the grass (1950's style). My guess is either that the artist missed the deadline or the art was lost, because this cover is totally out of character for that period in the title's history.

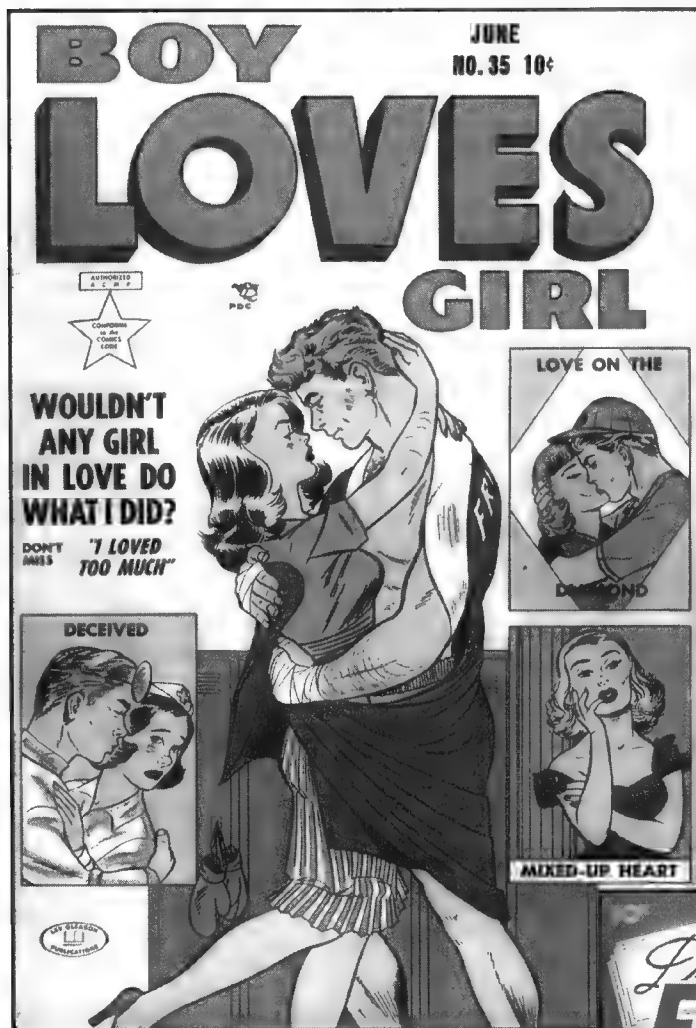
I've managed to find all but five of the 98 Gleason issues—*Boy Loves Girl* #47, 52, 53 and 55 and *Lovers' Lane* #32... so I suppose one might infer that they are pretty tough to find. Gleason published 52-page issues through November 1951 (*Boy Meets Girl* #1-17 and *Lovers' Lane* #1-18), before dropping both titles to 36 pages.

Now, let's look at the 111 Standard romance comics!

Standard Comics published many more titles in all genres than did Gleason, but they were almost all bimonthly or quarterly in the 1950s. Standard, otherwise known as Better Publications or Nedor, was a significant "second banana" publisher in the 1940s, as all collectors of Alex Schomburg's hero covers know.

Standard was also significant in the 1950s, although only if you enjoy horror, humor, or

Alex Schomburg did great air-brushed covers for the entire 5-issue run of *Dear Beatrice Fairfax* #5-9 (#8 Jul 1951 shown at left).



The cover of *Boy Loves Girl* #35 (Jun 1953) shows that there was plenty of sensuality in the Gleason pre-Code days!



father holding a clock reading 9:15 while the grandfather clock tones 1:00 a.m. Trickery afoot!

Gleason began a transition to steamier—and in a few cases considerably seamier—material following *Boy Meets Girl* #18, which has a "cute" Fudge cover of an innocently smiling girl on a swing yet a cover-featured story entitled "Pick-Up in the Park!"

A series of *Boy Meets Girl* photo covers of clinches follows through #24, the last issue before the title became *Boy Loves Girl* with #25 (July 1952). For six issues until the title change, Gleason tried something new—a teaser sentence. For example, check out this one for *Boy Meets Girl* #19 (January 1952)—"I loved Roger, that I

romance comics. Once that company abandoned heroes, it never went back to them. Likewise romance—when Standard jilted love comics in 1954, the company never went back.

More than any other company, Standard had a huge three-pronged pop culture publishing empire, beginning with pulps in the early 1930s, comics in the early 1940s and paperback books (Popular Library) from 1943 on. No other company published as many pulps, comics, and paperbacks combined, with the use of colorful, sensational covers emphasized on all three formats.

By the early 1950s, however, the covers on Standard's pulps were toned down considerably, with the paperbacks soon to follow. Standard's romance comics never needed to be toned down. However, Standard dropped all of its horror, crime, and romance comics in 1954, in part perhaps because of the raging controversy that soon led to the Comics Code... and in part to concentrate on the firm's burgeoning paperback business.

Virtually all of Standard's romance covers would have had no trouble meeting Code approval. Other than five beautiful Schomburg covers for *Dear Beatrice Fairfax* in 1950-51, Standard used nothing but photo covers, almost all of which featured the smiling faces of men and women including many movie stars. Nothing could have been more innocent.

Interestingly, Standard wasn't affected by the "Love Glut" of 1950. All four of the company's initial titles—*Popular Romance*, *Thrilling Romances*, *Western Hearts*, and *Intimate Love*—began in December 1949 or January 1950, all with a #5 for the first issue except *Western Hearts*. All four were published on a regular bimonthly/quarterly basis throughout 1950.

Dear Beatrice Fairfax, based on an obscure King Features Newspaper strip and often drawn by Vernon Greene, lasted only five issues. *Western Hearts* died out early in 1952 after ten issues (over 27 months) as one of the last of the briefly popular genre of western romance comics. (This genre was highly popular in the pulps for more than two decades, however.)

A fourth regular Standard romance title, *New Romances*, began with #5 in May 1951, lasting into the middle of 1954 along with *Popular Romance*, *Thrilling Romances*, and *Intimate Love*. Along the way, Standard tried three other titles in 1952, but all were short-lived—*Best Romance* #5-7, *Today's Romance* #5-8, and *My Real Love* #5.

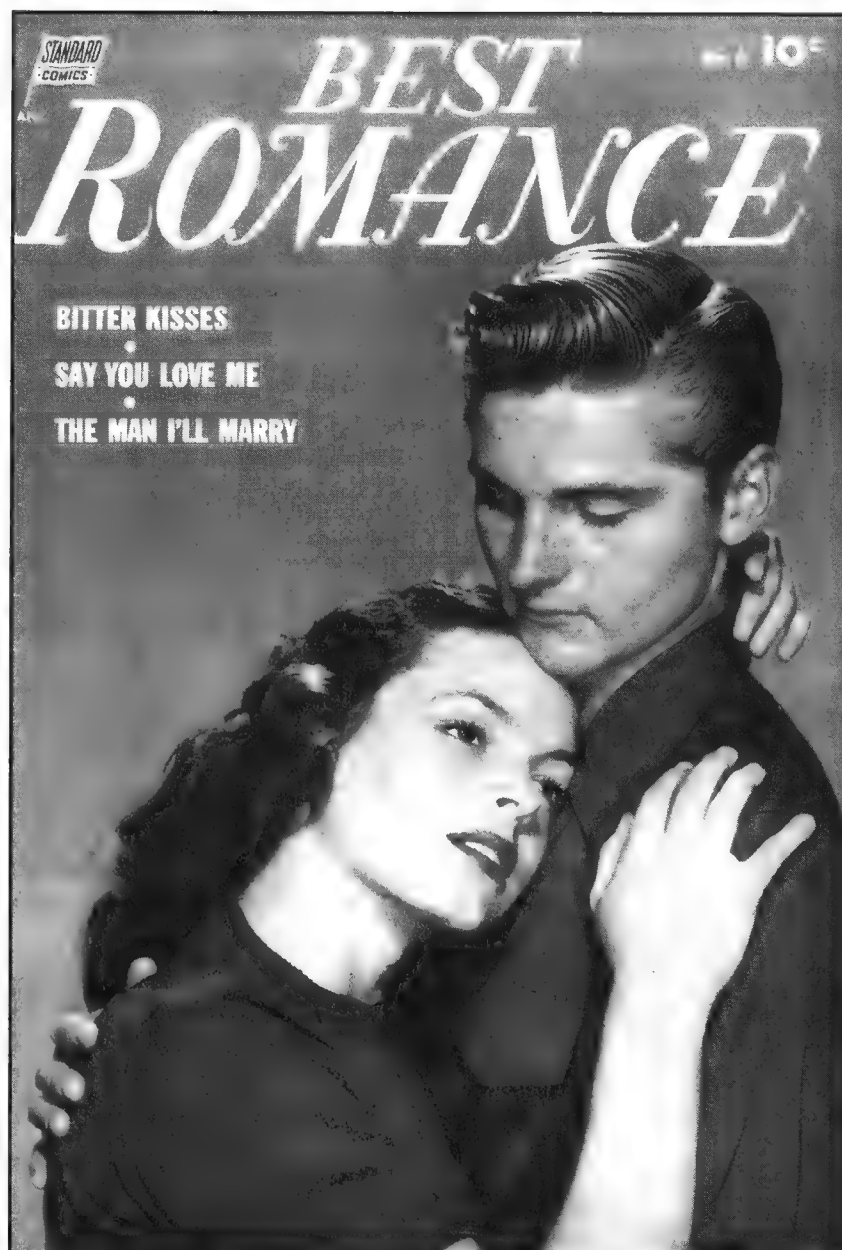
Beginning in the late 1940s, Standard started most of its new comics with a number other than 1 to 4, of course, because it made them seem more established during a period of intense newsstand competition. The theory was that comics would receive better distribution if they had been around long enough to seem like successes.

Standard romance comics tend to be popular with collectors, in part because of variety of artists and in part because of the upbeat photo covers (a few of which were duplicated by the same photos on the covers of Ace and Quality comics). They truly are period pieces symbolizing the "domestic bliss" of the 1950s.

The artists include Alex Toth, George Tuska, the Severin and Elder team, Rudy Palais, and John Celardo—top-notch practitioners all.

A representative Standard collection is not hard to find. I have located 73 of the 111 issues, buying primarily low-cost copies and passing up the more expensive FN to NM copies (or else I would have almost all of them). Southern California indexer Dan Stevenson does have all 111 issues—congratulations, Dan!—and Northern California comics historian Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr. has 108 (all but *Dear Beatrice Fairfax* #6, *My Real Love* #5 and *Intimate Love* #26, so if anyone has those, please speak up!).

One of the oddest of all romance covers adorned *Thrilling Romances* #19 (May 1952), featuring Michael Rennie and Ann Blyth as stars of 20th Century Fox's *I'll Never Forget You* (released first in Great Britain as *The House in the Square*). Rennie, fresh from his unforgettable starring role as the distinguished alien ambassador Klaatu in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, was 42 in 1951, when the photo was taken during filming... but



Standard's *Best Romance* #6 (May 1952) is really issue #2. Standard used photo covers on all its romance titles except *Dear Beatrice Fairfax*

Blyth was only 23. Fittingly enough, Rennie looks more like a proud father on this cover than a star-struck lover. But then, Blyth's love interest in this time-travel fantasy was Tyrone Power, who was 38 at the time, but younger looking than the vastly underrated Rennie.

Unlike romance titles from several other companies, Standard's titles had the same feel throughout their run. They certainly never got any grittier during the 1952-54 period when crime, vice, and horror was so popular in comics, including many romance titles. 

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from 1940s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950s comic books in the U.S. and has contributed volumes of data to the Overstreet Price Guide.



THE MANY MASKS OF SATURN GIRL!

The year is 1962, the comic *Action* #287. Imra Ardeen, known to friends and fellow Legionnaires in the wonderworld of the 30th century as Saturn Girl, is beside herself with worry. Her teammate Bouncing Boy has been unable to inflate himself and rebound up from the floor, and her boyfriend Garth Ranzz, the former Lightning Boy who now goes by the code name Lightning Lad, cannot even make his fingertips sizzle. Imra spies a toad nearby and quickly turns her powers on it. But it is to no avail. “—Moan—” she cries. “I mentally commanded that toad to jump, and it didn’t!” Her failure, of course, serves as proof that the Legionnaires’ powers are on the fritz.

We loved every minute, for these were the glory days of the Legion of Super-Heroes. The future teens, originally a one-shot gimmick in a 1958 Superboy story, were brought back time and again in response to the frequent demands of fans. In 1962 the Legion was given an eight year run in *Adventure Comics*, where it started as a humble backup but eventually became the sole feature. It then moved to *Action* for a little more than a year, after which it was relegated to reprints until clamoring fans convinced DC to write new adventures, this time in *Superboy*. Today *The Legion of Super-Heroes*, its spinoff, *Legionnaires*, and the team’s numerous mini-series and guest appearances continue to pique the interest of long-time fans who were around at the beginning and new recruits who have yet to discover and savor the first run.

When I started reading comics in 1973 (at the ripe old age of eight), I quickly entered the magic

SATURN GIRL © 2000 DC

BY MARK AMEEN JOHNSON

adventure world in the DC hundred page reprint books and stacks of tattered comics carried home from flea markets and yard sales. The Legion had a mesmerizing history that stretched back over the years and more characters than I could name, yet one Legionnaire stood out from the others and demanded that I pay attention to her. She was a strong, assertive woman, nothing like the dozen-some-odd heroines who eagerly took a back seat to their more powerful male counterparts. She was Imra Ardeen, telepath extraordinaire, an Alice Kramden amidst Marilyn Monroes and one of the three Legion founders.

Only Superboy, whose Smallville stories gave birth to these characters, and Cosmic Boy, "the heart and soul of the Legion" and my personal favorite, have ever had as strong a following as Imra. But while an equal number of devotees either puts Supes and Cos on pedestals or dismisses them as dull and uninspiring, very, very few have anything negative to say about Imra. This oh-so-'60s gal may not be everyone's favorite Legionnaire, but she usually ranks high on most fans' lists.

Imra is the only woman who boasts a distinct personality before the infusion of motivations that characterize the classic Legion run of the late '60s. When fans discuss the character, they project their aspirations onto her and, without realizing it, talk more about what they had wanted her to be instead of what she actually is.

Unfortunately, defining what she is proves no easy task. Women relate to her self-assurance, assertiveness, stability, and ability to be masculine without sacrificing her femininity. Men on the other hand may appreciate her leadership and intellect but may also see her as a stereotypical 1960's ideal... a nurturing, self-sacrificing mother figure who is also a blonde, blue-eyed bombshell. For this reason, Imra gives us mixed messages. She often expresses two emotional extremes or follows two contradictory aims during a single series of events. In one early adventure, for example, she succinctly and almost cruelly tells a desperate Sun Boy that his power loss is permanent. Nothing touchy-feely about this gal. But on the next page she becomes Mother Goddess again, weeping before him as she says how much she will miss him and how the Legion will not be the same without him (*Adventure* #302, 1962).

In a sexist sense, the sobs help define her as a woman. After all, you would never see Garth sobbing for Sun Boy, his best friend at the time. This is the early 1960s. I believe that Imra's male writers and artists felt uncomfortable with her masculine role as leader and thus stuck in the tears and other stereotypical characteristics to put themselves and their readers at ease.

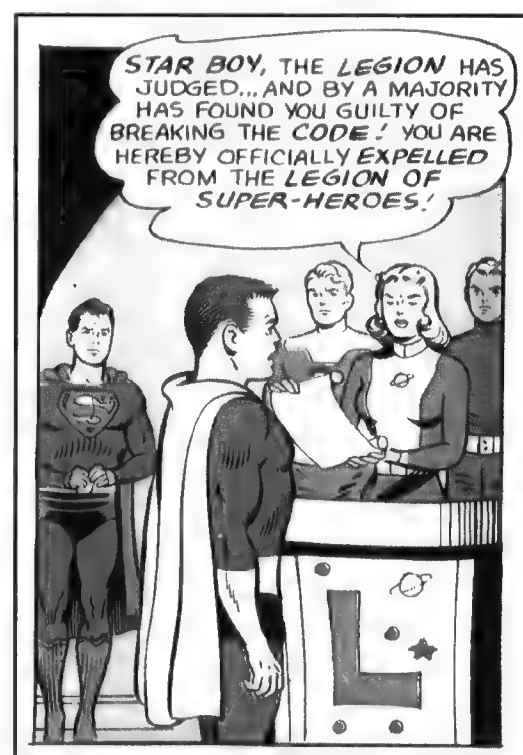
Despite DC's tendency to overwrite her, Imra has always had extraordinary charisma and composure. During her first appearance it is she, not Legion Leader Cosmic Boy, who is in charge (*Adventure* #247, 1958). Cos is clearly in command on the cover, but once you open the book you see who really

wears the pants (under her skirt). Imra gives the orders on the splash page, uses a blackboard (a blackboard in the 30th century?) to keep track of Superboy's failures during his initiation hazing, and then finally gives him the good news that he has been admitted to their teen super-hero club.

Already challenging the patriarchal status quo by her second appearance, she chastises Superboy, stealing Superman's line by crying: "This is a job for Saturn Girl!" (*Adventure* #267, 1959). She later becomes the Legion's second leader... and its first re-elected leader. So trusted is she that the Legionnaires are willing to admit Mystery Lad (later Element Lad) to their ranks based on her recommendation even though they know nothing about his identity, motivation, and powers (*Adventure* #307, 1963). And when she is surrounded by an all-male cadre of Legionnaires during a time-travel story, she is sufficiently self-assured to take on teammate Brainiac 5 in a shouting match single-handedly, declare his choice of allies on ancient Krypton unacceptable, and lead her own Legion team in waging war against his followers (*Adventure* #333, 1965). The boys, Superboy included, meekly do whatever she tells them.

This comes as no surprise. Honorary Legionnaire Supergirl aside, Imra is clearly the team's counterpart to the all-powerful male troika of Superboy, Mon-El and Ultra Boy. Does any Legion fan believe that the boys on ancient Krypton would have fallen in line if Dream Girl or Shrinking Violet had started barking out orders?

In "The Legionnaire Who Killed!" (*Adventure* #342), Saturn Girl takes on the role of Judge in Star Boy's trial



Imra simply never lets her sex define or limit her. Refusing to let her emotions take control, she is the only woman willing to expel Star Boy from the Legion after he kills in self-defense (*Adventure* 342, 1966). As Superboy explains to Star Boy: "Almost all the girls are on your side because of your romance with Dream Girl." As always, the other Legion women act in concert; Imra stands by her convictions.

Her bravery, a stereotypically masculine quality, is also unsurpassed. When the female Legionnaires fall under the hypnotic control of Queen Azura of the planet Femnaz and make elaborate plans to kill their male teammates, fear-

SATURN GIRL!

less Imra elects to take on Superboy, the big fish himself, unassisted (*Adventure* #326, 1964). When a huge disembodied gauntlet challenges the mightiest Legionnaire, eleven male Legionnaires and Saturn Girl claim that title (*Adventure* #375,

1968). The twelve then compete for the honor of answering the call. Garth begs Imra not to take part, but she retorts, "One of us girls has to try!" The twelve contestants divide into four teams of three, each of which will produce one champion for the finals. Imra's task is to capture Orintho the bird man before Chemical King or Chameleon Boy can.

At this point our cheers stop, for sexist writing changes the tone of Imra's storyline. It is

clear that the writers are afraid to let a woman win. She cannot bond with the guys during the hunt, a sacred male domain, and inexplicably changes from master of all trades to buffoon. She loses her opportunity to capture Orintho, and is instead surprised and captured. (A telepath caught by surprise?) Chemical King has to save her, thereby ruining his own chance of victory along with hers. Chameleon Boy thus scoops up

cepts a warning from the Trylop Council of the Planet Mernl. A Legionnaire is destined to die while saving the earth from Zaryan the Conqueror, but the Council does not know which. Destroying the warning, Imra uses her mental powers to trick the Legionnaires into electing her Legion leader. She then becomes a tyrant, grounding the other Legionnaires as they fail rigged tests so she can take their place as a one woman Legion. Unbeknown to her teammates, she has borrowed their powers and is determined to take on Zaryan alone as willing martyr. At this point her capacity for self-sacrifice is no longer a stereotype, and she becomes a hero in the truest sense of the word. I wonder how many young women in the '60s were inspired by her daring and non-stereotypical behavior.

As Legion fans have long known, no tale of twenty-five heroes comes without an unexpected plot twist. In love with her even at that early juncture, Garth beats her to the punch and saves her from a lethal explosion by paying for her life with his. "Don't cry Saturn Girl," he says. "Better me than you." The funeral sequence, with a weeping Imra led away by Superboy, is one of the most often cited events in Legion history.

A little less than a year later the assembled Legionnaires are determined to revive Garth even though it means one of them will die for him (*Adventure* #312, 1963). Determined to be the lamb sacrificed on the altar of her beloved, Imra again deceives the others. The assembled Legionnaires hold "metal wands" to attract lightning bolts and place their hands atop round devices on Garth's glass coffin. The doomed Legionnaire, selected at random by nature, will die as the bolt races through his or her body but will transfer enough life-force to Garth's preserved corpse to reanimate it. Imra, of course, takes steps to insure that she will be struck. Fortunately for her, Protty, Chameleon Boy's sentient pet protoplasmic blob, decoys her long enough in nearby caverns to take her place and die in her stead. The lovers, having cheated death, are reunited in life.

This paradigm... all-giving woman and semi-lunkhead... is rehashed three times for the January, September and December 1964 issues of *Adventure*. (Granted, the likable Garth of the '60s is not Live Wire, the Marvelous lunkhead of the late '90s. But I maintain that the other three men involved in the 1964 Legion romances are guilty as charged.) The Legion's other famous/infamous couple, Phantom Girl and Ultra Boy, becomes part of Legion lore when Phantom Girl, forgoing rationality for love at first sight, believes in Ultra Boy's innocence despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary (*Adventure* #316, 1964). Then, love at first sight convinces Shrinking Violet to sacrifice everything for Duplicate Boy, a hero from the planet Lallor. Three issues later it makes Lightning Lass, who has by this time become Light Lass, stand by the Lone Wolf (the future Timber Wolf). A number of fans cheered in the mid-'80s when Lightning Lass and Violet gave up co-dependency and dumped their Princes Not-So-Charming. Phantom Girl, who has returned from the dead more than once, did marry Ultra Boy last year. Imra of the late



As leader of the LSH, Saturn Girl rejects "Double-Header" as a potential member in *Adventure* #323



In "The Weddings That Wrecked The Legion" (#337) Imra pretends to marry Lightning Lad

Orintho and wins the round.

On the many occasions that the Legionnaires demonstrate characteristic selflessness and self-sacrifice, once again it is one of the guys or Saturn Girl in the foreground. In the classic "Stolen Super Powers" (*Adventure* #304, 1963), Imra inter-

'90s quit the Legion joined the Science Police. Now she is lost in another universe (reality) in the *Lost Legion* maxi-series.

But I digress. In the mindset of the '60s, what was a woman without a man? For all DC's attempts at giving Imra a distinct character and making her self-sufficient, she remains Garth's girlfriend first and draws a significant part of her identity from her pairing. However, the beauty of the Imra/Garth relationship, at least as it was portrayed in the '60s, is that the love is mutual. It is easy to believe that Garth completely adores her. Not only is Imra willing to die for Garth in *Adventure* #312, but he in turn claims that he does not want to live if Imra's life is the price. Unfortunately, early '60s morality ruins the deliciousness of the story. How sad that Imra and Garth, each back from the dead in the other's eyes and gazing upon a living lover for the first time in months, do not so much as shake hands when they are reunited. After all, good girls do not let men touch them. Only Lightning Lass, Garth's sister, is allowed to hug him. Perhaps artist John Forte realized the ludicrousness of the situation, for *Adventure* #312's last panel shows from the neck up, tears streaming down Imra's (but, unfortunately, not masculine Garth's) cheeks. One can only imagine the relief they feel in the warmth of their forbidden embrace, which we all know happened. I know I imagined it. I still do.

Eventually, love conquers all. Two years later, Imra and Garth walk with locked arms and (finally!) get to kiss (*Adventure* #337, 1965). And true to character, Imra initiates it. "Among the undersea people of the water-world Vavalla," she explains as she and Garth look at an exhibit of interplanetary marriage customs, "when a girl swims under the rare scarlet spiral coral, it means she wants to be kissed. It's like a mistletoe on earth." As if on cue, a rare scarlet spiral coral appears above her head. She must have been desperate. And Garth must have been terribly shy. She even points to the three foot macaroni swirling above her head in case Garth fails to notice it. By the end of the story the two kiss again... after acknowledging that they will, of course, marry. Could this have been a move to placate the morality-minded powers that be and get away with not one but two kisses? (Actually, it is four. Phantom Girl and Ultra Boy mimic both kiss and marriage promise, although a halo-jewel from the planet Hrann, not a rare scarlet spiral coral, appears on cue above Phantom Girl's head.)

Eventually, love conquers all. Two years later, Imra and Garth walk with locked arms and (finally!) get to kiss (*Adventure* #337, 1965). And true to character, Imra initiates it. "Among the undersea people of the water-world Vavalla," she explains as she and Garth look at an exhibit of interplanetary marriage customs, "when a girl swims under the rare scarlet spiral coral, it means she wants to be kissed. It's like a mistletoe on earth." As if on cue, a rare scarlet spiral coral appears above her head. She must have been desperate. And Garth must have been terribly shy. She even points to the three foot macaroni swirling above her head in case Garth fails to notice it. By the end of the story the two kiss again... after acknowledging that they will, of course, marry. Could this have been a move to placate the morality-minded powers that be and get away with not one but two kisses? (Actually, it is four. Phantom Girl and Ultra Boy mimic both kiss and marriage promise, although a halo-jewel from the planet Hrann, not a rare scarlet spiral coral, appears on cue above Phantom Girl's head.)



The oddities in Imra's portrayal are not limited to her creators' masculine temperament. Her physical appearance changes as often as her personality. In *Adventure* #247, Imra looks like Agnes Moorehead with light brown hair and an unflattering yellow and green costume, colors that would later define Legion foe Nemesis Kid. In case you are unable to recognize her in these colors, she conveniently wears the words Saturn Girl on her chest. (Perhaps DC felt that younger readers would be unable to tell her apart from Lightning Lad and Cosmic Boy.) Garth sports red, white, and yellow in the same issue. A year later, Imra celebrates her second appearance with an attractive red and white costume and a yellow insignia. It is a color scheme she keeps for the next eleven years. Did she read Garth's mind, discover his attraction to her, and adopt his colors in a thirtieth-century mating ritual? I like to think so.

Imra's physical appearance changes many times throughout the early '60s; at one point she becomes such a Supergirl look-alike that, in a little-known cameo appearance, she is able to disguise herself as the Kryptonian to foil the designs of Tor-An, a handsome escapee from the Phantom Zone who has turned his charms on Supergirl to marry and humiliate her (*Action* #307, 1963). After a few renderings that hearken to Janet Leigh and Barbie, among others, Imra's appearance stabilizes. But in 1970 she hands in her trademark costume and becomes Farrah Fawcett Imra in a revealing hot pink bathing suit designed by Legion fan K. Metzger (*Action* #392, 1970).

Saturn Girl worries about giving away information about the most powerful weapon in the Universe (The Concentrator) by accidentally "thought-casting" the well guarded secret in *Adventure* #321.

SATURN GIRL!

The super gals let it all hang out in "The Revolt of the Girl Legionnaires" (*Adventure* #326)

Imra keeps her bathing suit until the early '80s, when Keith Giffen gives an adult Imra Ardeen Ranzz, wife to Garth and mother of two sets of twins, a more modest costume based on her classic red and white threads. In 1994 the old Legion continuity is erased, and the Legionnaires begin anew as teenagers. Today's ponytailed Imra wears a modified Giffen costume with pants and large pink Saturn earrings.



Fans have always been divided over which costume suits her best... and whether conservative Imra would have actually worn the bathing suit, which may or may not be considered revealing by thirtieth-century standards. Interestingly, the hot pink install-



SG plays doctor to help Mon-El leave the Phantom Zone

ment turns Sun Boy into Saturn Lad and dresses him in the same women's bathing suit. Although fans had much to say about Imra's drastic change, Sun Boy's new look, which was a plot device and never surfaced again, also drew a surprising number of comments. Some fans thought his makeover very hot while others found it utterly ridiculous. Further, Chameleon Boy appears beside his teammate as a fleshy male Princess Projectra. Clearly, the DC of the early '70s was willing to take chances.

Again, I digress. Not surprisingly, Imra's powers change even more often than her appearance. They are never clearly defined; the writers simply bend them as easily as her personality to suit

each storyline. In the original 1958 story, Imra's nameplate identifies her as a practitioner of "super-thought casting," the result of her having been trained by "the scientists of Saturn, who are experts in telepathy." (Incidentally, later stories occasionally placed the hyphen between thought and casting or used hyphens to link all three words.) In the 1959 follow-up, she becomes a Princess Projectra prototype who stops a thug by creating the illusion of a cobra attacking him. She also claims to have the power to tune into radio broadcasts mentally (!).

During one of the Legion's numerous cameo appearances in a Superman title, Imra's "mental powers" allow her to sense that a message capsule from the twentieth century is from Supergirl (*Action* #285, 1962). In another cameo, "the super-heroine whose mental feats are fantastic catches a mind-message" projected by Mon-El, at the time a prisoner in the Phantom Zone (*Superman* #156, 1962). My personal favorite is her using "thought-casting" (no "super") to search all the minds that have ever existed in earth's past (*Adventure* #314, 1963). Sitting next to her as they travel in a Time Bubble, Sun Boy says: "When you sense Alaktor telepathically, we'll stop in that age." Two issues later Imra's "telepathic thought casting power" (no hyphens) functions as a distress beacon "of a great disaster striking in another part of the earth."

Oddly, however, on two occasions this master telepath does not know that Garth, her beloved, is feigning cowardice (*Adventure* #321, 1964) and mental illness (*Adventure* #330, 1965) to carry out super-heroics in secret. During the Jim Shooter era of the late '60s, Imra has "E.S.P. Power" and can even calm throngs of panicking commuters during a disaster by "thought casting messages of reassurance" (*Adventure* #368, 1968). By the time the Legion moves to *Action Comics*, however, her abilities have been reduced to "thought waves" (*Action* #386, 1970) or mere "telepathic powers" (*Action* #390, 1970).

I ask you, reader, what is Imra Ardeen's power? What does she look like? And who is she really? I believe that Imra appeals to everyone because she is so many things at once: consistent and inconsistent, able and unable, nurturer and nurtured, modest and immodest, commander and follower, pioneer and stereotype, limitless and limited, confidante and "Ice Maiden," as her teammates often call her. She is so human, so like us.

I had originally set out to write an article praising her unashamedly and condemning the creative team that does not always do her justice. I had hoped to prove that she, as liberated comic hero par excellence well before her time, paved the way for other super-powered women. I had hoped to portray her as a character who refuses to give in to sexist writing and instead takes on an identity apart from the one assigned her.

Instead, I have discovered that my Imra is simply not everyone else's. She is a woman for all seasons who jumps from one skin to the next and defies all attempts to pin her down. Whoever she is, I will always consider her my Imra just as you will always consider her yours. 

COMIC BOOK COLLECTING IN...

THE TWILIGHT ZONE



There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow—between science and superstition. And it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone.

BY BOB KUHL

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

So says the introduction to one of the most innovative and popular television shows of all time. During its original run from 1959 to 1964, *The Twilight Zone* would cut its own distinctive path through modern television. With its use of imaginative scripts, suspense and shadow, as well as its often wry and ironic twist endings, *The Twilight Zone* would inspire a cult follow-

cover date of March/May, 1961. Its inside front cover features the show's famous introduction. (I suppose it was left to the reader to hum the theme music.) Its opening story, "Specter Of Youth" concerns a greedy man's search for the fountain of youth which goes better than he expected. "Phantom Lighthouse" which is also the cover story, takes an eerie approach to a good deed being repaid. The last tale, "Doom By Prediction" has a descendant of the Salem witches proving the adage "ignorance is bliss." The inside back cover would showcase a series called "Journeys Into The Twilight Zone." Such one page features would delve into the unknown and unexplained of everyday life and would be regularly shown throughout most of the book's run. Rod Serling himself (in comic book form) was also on hand to introduce and wrap up each of the stories. In time, he would occasionally forego the standard suit and tie and opt for an outfit more suited to the story (medieval armor, military fatigues, etc.)

It would be nearly another year before another *Twilight Zone* comic would hit the stands. *Four Color* #1288 was released with a cover date of February/April, 1962. The inside front cover had two panel "teasers" for each of the three main stories inside. (This would only be done for this issue and the two subsequent Dell issues.) The first tale "The Bridegroom" tells the story of a con man who chooses marriage as a profession. One of my favorite stories, "The Secret Weapon," is about a Nazi hunter who finds out what really happened to Hitler and his cronies. There is then a brief two-pager entitled "Voices from the Twilight Zone" which looks at an alleged precognitive dream that Abraham Lincoln had foretelling his death. The last story, "The Joiner" reveals the final triumph of a bullied man. The inside back cover deals with the history of good luck charms in "Voyage Into The Twilight Zone."

Dell #01-860-207 (May/July, 1962) would pretty much carry the same format. In "The Man From Nowhere," a man finds out what really is of true value. "Beyond The Window" gives an aging baseball star the chance to relive his past glory. "Hard Luck Harvey" basically proves that luck is where you find it. Never to let good cover space go to waste, good luck charms as well as mystical cities are explored on the inside back cover and outside back cover respectively.

Dell #12-860-210 (August/October, 1962) would be the last of the *Twilight Zones* to be published under the Dell imprint. In "The Ring," we are "treated" to the story of a young man's affection for ... a mannequin! "The Collector" is about the fate of a ruthless hunter who ultimately becomes the hunted himself. "The Time Machine" (not to be confused with the H.G. Wells classic) is a bit of a lighthearted morality play about the dangers of messing with the forces of nature. The inside back cover features a look at mythology and superstition in "Creatures From The Twilight Zone."

The *Twilight Zone* would finally get its own numbered series in November, 1962. Issue one would also be the first of its comic books to be released under the Gold Key imprint. It too would also feature assorted "strange but true" material on both inside covers. This issue also marks the start of one-paged text entries dealing with the unexplained, folklore, and "urban legend" type material. These would appear in each issue for approximately the first 2/3's of the *Twilight Zone*'s run.

In "Perilous Journey" a man ends up falling in love with a mirage (or does he?) Being a "fan" of the whole George Custer saga, I found "Do Not Touch Exhibit" particularly amusing. In it, a museum thief gets dealt a strange brand of justice. The issue ends as it began with another romance

TWILIGHT ZONE © CANYUGA PRODUCTIONS INC. ART © WESTERN PUBLISHING



Cameo appearances by Bela Lugosi (as Dracula), Clark Gable, and Lon Chaney, Jr. make *Twilight Zone* #18 (Nov 1966, Gold Key) one of the more collectible issues.

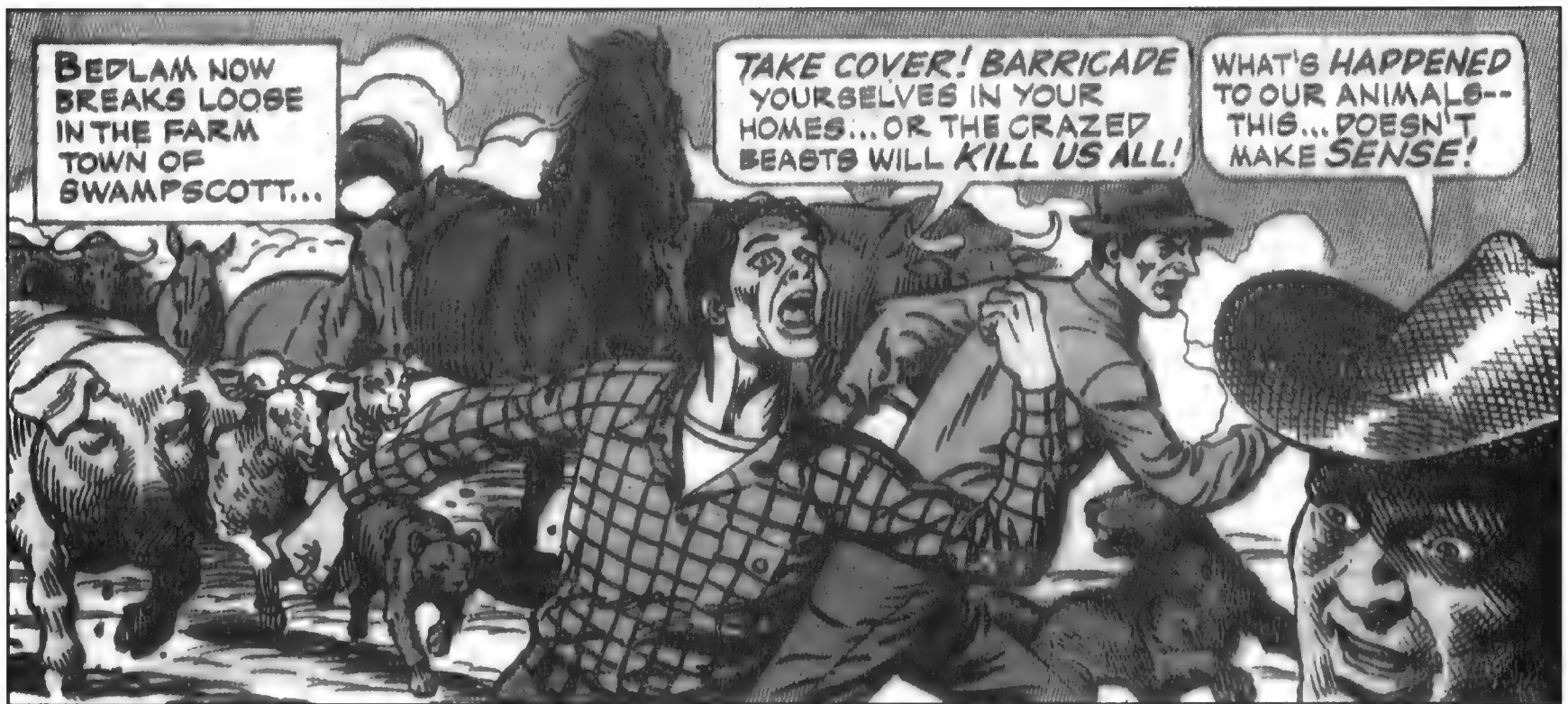
For *A Heavyweight* in 1955 and 1956, respectively. Quite the prolific writer, Serling would write 89 of the *Twilight Zone* 151 episodes. Aside from the high quality writing and directing, the show would also feature the early works of a number of soon-to-be well known stars such as William Shatner, Jack Klugman, and Billy Mumy, just to name a few.

On the heels of its peak popularity, a comic book series would be released, capturing the show in four-color glory. Between March of 1961 and May of 1982, Western Publishing, under its imprints of Dell, Gold Key, and Whitman would publish 96 comic books. Its run of 21 years far outlived the length of the television series (and its creator as well.)

The first *Twilight Zone* comic book was Dell's *Four Color* #1173 with a

ing that is still going strong today. (Some 36 years after its original run.)

The show itself was the brainchild of writer Rod Serling, who had already won Emmys for the television plays *Patterns* and *Requiem*



Many *Twilight Zone* stories used animals as the central focus of the plot... and this panel from TZ #44 (Jul 1972) is an entertaining example.

pages long, informational material on the inside covers, and lastly a one page text entry dealing with the bizarre or unexplained. The opener, "The Lost Colonie" (sic) follows the adventures of an inadvertent time traveler. The destructive power of greed is displayed in "Journey Into Jeopardy," and "The Ray Of Phobos" takes a look at a trip to Mars.

While most of the stories throughout *Twilight Zone's* run were some form of "morality play" where justice is ultimately done, the comic books still managed to offer a variety of topics and themes. With issue #3 (May, 1963) "The Last Battle" does a variation on the ever popular war story. "Birds Of A Feather" deals with animal cruelty and it's best not to disturb the dead in "The Queen Is Dead, Long Live The Queen."

Occasionally, the stories would often try to offer an explanation for mythology and even actual historical events. In issue #4 (August, 1963) "The Secret Of The Key" examines what may have happened to France's King Louis XVI. "The Ordeal Of Bluebird 3" offers up an explanation of the Atlantis legend. Rounding out issue #4 are "Experiment In Purple" which han-

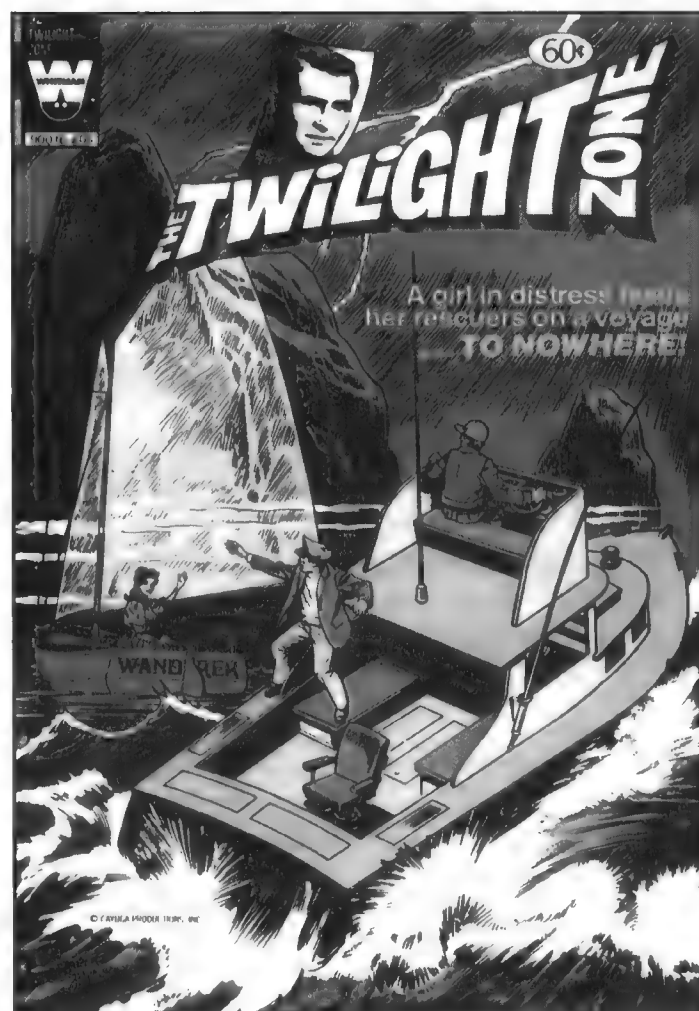
dale entitled "Voyage To Nowhere."

Now on a quarterly schedule, the second issue is dated February, 1963. By now, *The Twilight Zone* had established its basic format. There were three main stories, each 7 to 11

dles the potential problems of an alien threat, and "The Captive," a neat little tale about toys taking revenge on an unsympathetic toy store manager.

Retribution for Nazi war criminals is revisited in issue #5 (November, 1963) with "The Legacy Of Hans Burkel." Anybody who has ever sent for cereal premiums will enjoy "Poor Little Sylvester." "The Shadow Of Fate" is an allegedly true story about Queen Victoria. Lastly, historical themes are employed again in "The Fortune Hunter" in which the ghosts of Civil War soldiers return to garner justice 100 years later.

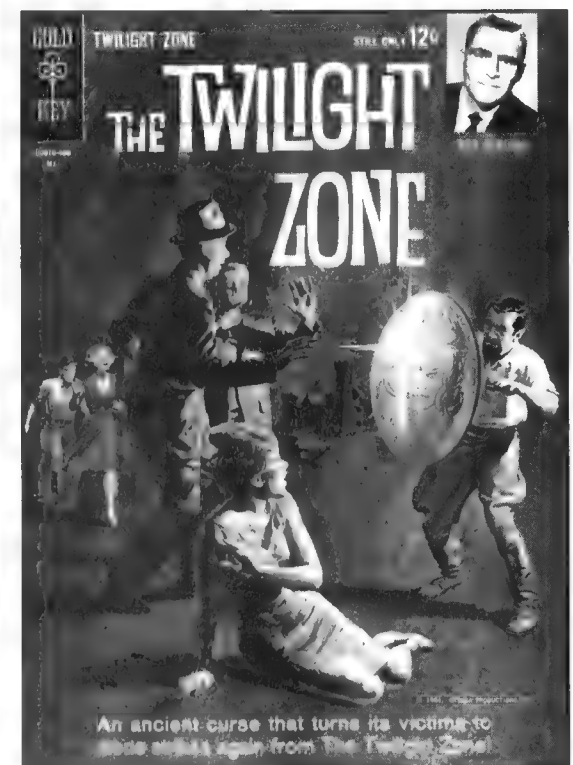
The first issue of 1964, #6 (February) opens with a 17 page story "Captives Of The Mirage," the longest *Twilight Zone* story to date. In it, by the power of



LEFT: The scarce last issue of *Twilight Zone* (#92) features a re-worked logo and has no date in the indicia!

(Overstreet lists it as May, 1982.)

BELOW: *Twilight Zone* #7 (May 1964).

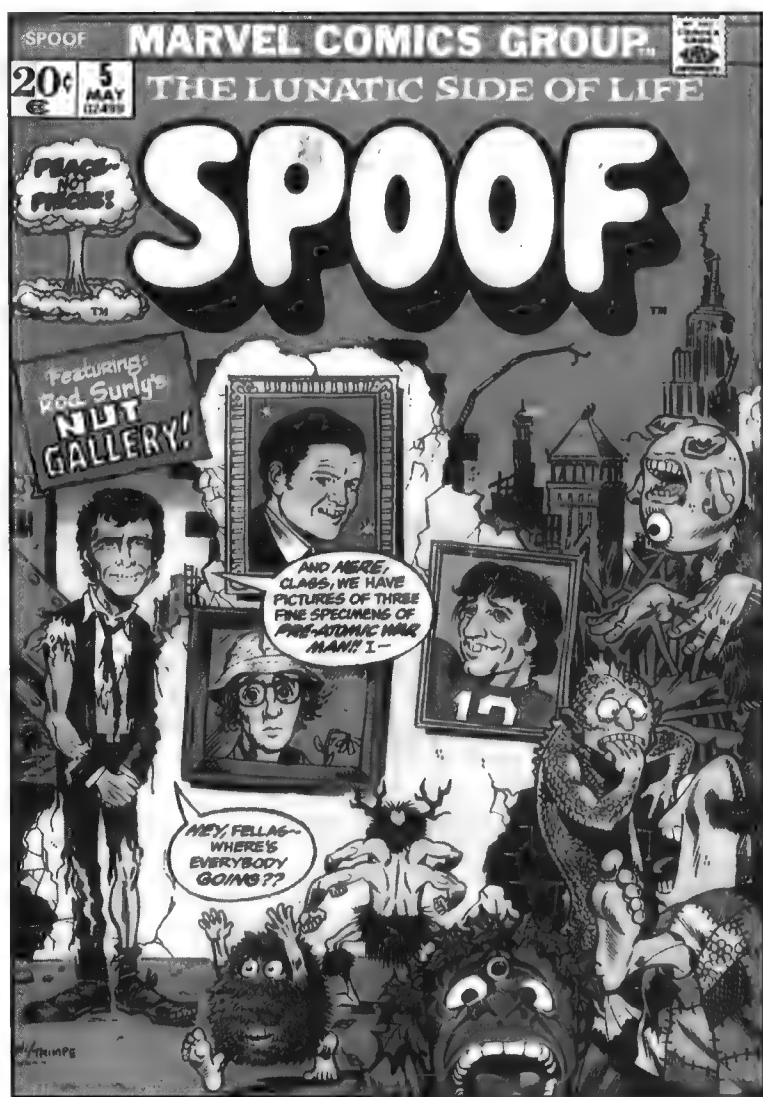


THE TWILIGHT ZONE

a centuries old amulet, justice is served. In one of the better "strange but true" entries, "The Night People Of London," offers a look at how throughout history, the blind have helped the seeing during blackouts, heavy fog, etc. Finally, in "The Last Sixty Seconds" a ventriloquist gets the revenge he desires.

Mythology once again gets the lead story in issue #7 (May, 1964) with the "Shield Of Medusa." (Medusa was one of several classic mythological characters and/or places the *Twilight Zone* writers would use more than once.) In "The Menace From Out There" superstitions associated with comets are examined. The final story, "The Man Who Haunted Himself" concerns a ghostly revenge on a tyrannical coal mine owner.

PARODY FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE?



While the *Twilight Zone* title was still going strong at Gold Key, Rod Serling and his second television series, *Night Gallery*, were both parodied in an 8-page story in Marvel Comics' *SPOOF* #5 (May 1973). "Nut Gallery" was hosted by none other than "Rod Surly." Like the actual *Night Gallery* TV show, we see the stories and fates of a number of unlucky individuals (including Rod Surly himself!) through a series of "spooky" paintings.

Issue #8 (August, 1964) is the last of the comic books that would be contemporary with the *Twilight Zone*'s initial television run. (October 2, 1959 to September 18, 1964). In the tale "Hamilton's Creature," aliens decide not to help mankind after viewing several instances of prejudice. (This is very reminiscent of some of the Stan Lee/Steve Ditko stories from the Marvel/Atlas horror titles.) Sleepwalking is showcased in "The Night Striker Of Paris." The final entry, "Iron Man #1 (not to be confused with our old friend at Marvel) is a surprisingly moving story about a robot who finds peace and contentment amongst the animals, not people.

Despite the cancellation of the television series, the comic book would persevere for many years to come, and would eventually increase to a bi-monthly title for a time. For the most part, *Twilight Zone* would keep the same format as well as its above average scripting and art. Even though it no longer co-existed with new television episodes, there would still be a remarkable number of highlights (and an occasional "lowligh") for the rest of its run.

In "Doomsday In Dusterville" (#11, May, 1965) an alien manages to bring law and order to a remote western town. While western themes are abundant throughout the series, it's the neat takes like this one that keep things interesting.

About three decades prior to the TV show *Early edition*, *The Twilight Zone* offered up "The Man Who Could read The Future" in issue #13 (November, 1965). Like the television show, a man receives the newspaper a day before the events occur. (But how will he use this new found "power"?). Likewise, in "The Vision Of Mystir" (#15, May, 1966) a reluctant psychic ultimately sees his own death. (Much like the episode of the *X-Files*, starring Peter Boyle.)

Anyone who likes to collect celebrity cameos will love "The Impressionist" from issue #18 (November, 1966) In it an abusive would be Rich Little is given his due by the likes of Clark Gable, Edward G. Robinson, Laurel and Hardy, and Bela Lugosi. Its eerily bizarre in an amusing way.

By far and away though, the most recurring plot lines dealt with animal cruelty and the proper treatment of animals, both living and dead. Pets also often took the responsibility of getting revenge for their murdered masters. "The Human Pet" from issue *TZ* #23 (October, 1967) poses the question "what if animals kept humans as pets?" It's a somewhat whimsical tale including the use of elephants as "human catchers"! It also features a fantastic cover as well.

In "A Different Point Of View" (#31, December, 1969) we are given a look at how animals might view man. This theme is also reprised in "Every Dog Has His Day" from issue #82. (January, 1978) A cat gets revenge for his master's murder in "The Cat With The Evil Eye" (#38, July, 1971). The slaughtering of sacred animals gets the *Twilight Zone* treatment in "The Curse Of Seal Bay" (#45, September, 1972) In much the same spirit as Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" is "The Swampscott Explosion" (#44, July, 1972). Animals are driven to insanity with an experimental pesticide as the culprit. It also features a very amusing panel of a sheep attacking a man! (I'll bet Woody Allen would be proud!) In yet another take on the animals theme, a cruel vivisectionist has the tables turned in "A Trip To Limbo" (*TZ* #69, March, 1976) There were several such themes on animals in other stories as well. Ultimately, the animals always got the upper hand (or paw or wing.)

The rest of the series would likewise deal with themes explored in prior issues. Romance, war, science fiction, man's inhumanity to man, vanity, greed and other topics were explored in numerous ways. The endings all had one common thread: Justice was always served.

A C B M C H E C K L I S T

TWILIGHT ZONE

Dell issues

Four Color #1173.....	#6.....(Feb 1964)
.....(Mar/May 1961)	#7.....(May 1964)
Four Color #1288.....	#8.....(Aug 1964)
.....(Feb/Apr 1962)	#9.....(Nov 1964)
#01-860-207.....	
.....(May/Jul 1962)	#10.....(Feb 1965)
#12-860-210.....	#11.....(May 1965)
.....(Aug/Oct 1962)	#12.....(Aug 1965)
	#13.....(Nov 1965)

Silver Age

Gold Key issues

#1.....(Nov 1962)	#14.....(Feb 1966)
	#15.....(May 1966)
	#16.....(Jul 1966)
#2.....(Feb 1963)	#17.....(Sep 1966)
#3.....(May 1963)	#18.....(Nov 1966)
#4.....(Aug 1963)	
#5.....(Nov 1963)	#19.....(Jan 1967)
	#20.....(Mar 1967)

#21.....(May 1967,
Reprint FC #1173)
#22.....(Jul 1967)
#23.....(Oct 1967)

#24.....(Jan 1968)
#25.....(Apr 1968)
#26.....(Jul 1968)
#27.....(Dec 1968)

#28.....(Mar 1969)
#29.....(Jun 1969)
#30.....(Sep 1969)
#31.....(Dec 1969)

Bronze Age

Gold Key issues

#32.....(Mar 1970)
#33.....(Jun 1970)
#34.....(Sep 1970)
#35.....(Dec 1970)
#36.....(Mar 1971)

#37.....(May 1971)
#38.....(Jul 1971)
#39.....(Sep 1971)
#40.....(Nov 1971)

#41.....(Jan 1972)
#42.....(Mar 1972)
#43.....(May 1972)
#44.....(Jul 1972)
#45.....(Sep 1972)
#46.....(Nov 1972)
#47.....(no mnth 1972)

#48.....(no mnth 1973)
#49.....(May 1973)
#50.....(Jul 1973)
#51.....(Aug 1973)
#52.....(Sep 1973)
#53.....(Nov 1973)
#54.....(Jan 1974)
#55.....(Mar 1974)
#56.....(May 1974)

#57.....(Jul 1974)
#58.....(Aug 1974)
#59.....(Sep 1974)
#60.....(Nov 1974)

#61.....(Jan 1975)
#62.....(Mar 1975)
#63.....(May 1975)
#64.....(Jul 1975)
#65.....(Aug 1975)
#66.....(Sep 1975)
#67.....(Nov 1975)

#68.....(Jan 1976)
#69.....(Mar 1976)
#70.....(May 1976)
#71.....(Jul 1976)
#72.....(Aug 1976)
#73.....(Sep 1976)
#74.....(Nov 1976)
#75.....(Jan 1977)
#76.....(Mar 1977)

#77.....(May 1977)
#78.....(Jul 1977)
#79.....(Aug 1977)
#80.....(Sep 1977)
#81.....(Nov 1977)

#82.....(Jan 1978)
#83.....(Apr 1978)
#84.....(Jun 1978)
#85.....(Jul 1978)
#86.....(Aug 1978)
#87.....(Oct 1978)
#88.....(Dec 1978)

#89.....(Feb 1979)
#90.....(Apr 1979)
#91.....(Jun 1979)

#92.....(no date in
indicia, the Overstreet
Price Guide says May
1982; Whitman)

The Twilight Zone had managed to span both the Silver and Bronze Ages of comics. While there has always been a keen interest in the Dells and early Gold Keys, there has been increasing attention given to the more recent issues as comics from the 1970s continue to grow in popularity. This is especially true of issue #84 (June, 1978). This is the first comic book art of Frank Miller, best known for his amazing takes on the superheroes Batman and Daredevil. It is also one of only two "giant size" issues of *Twilight Zone* ever offered. (Along with issue #83, they were both 48 pages each.) Just a few years ago, this book was valued in the \$2 to \$3 range. In the latest *Overstreet*, it is now listed at less than \$20 for a NM copy. As Miller's prominence and popularity continue to increase, I believe demand for this comic will increase as well.

Serling himself died in 1975 of a heart attack. He was only fifty. The comic book would persevere without interruption for about four more years. (There was a three year gap in between issues #91 and #92, the final issue.) His face still graced the covers, although the photograph was replaced with an ink drawing by the end of the series. He also continued to introduce the stories and occasionally appear at their conclusions.

(Perhaps he was doing the narration from his own *Twilight Zone*.)

Issue #92 (May, 1982) would be the last from Western Publishing, printed under the Whitman label. While the stories are all reprints, it is unique in the sense that it is the only issue not to have at least a partially painted cover. (Most of the covers from the series are works of art unto themselves.)

Despite the passing of Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone* has continued to live on. The old series has aired in syndication for several decades, most prominently on the Sci-Fi Channel. A full length theatrical movie was

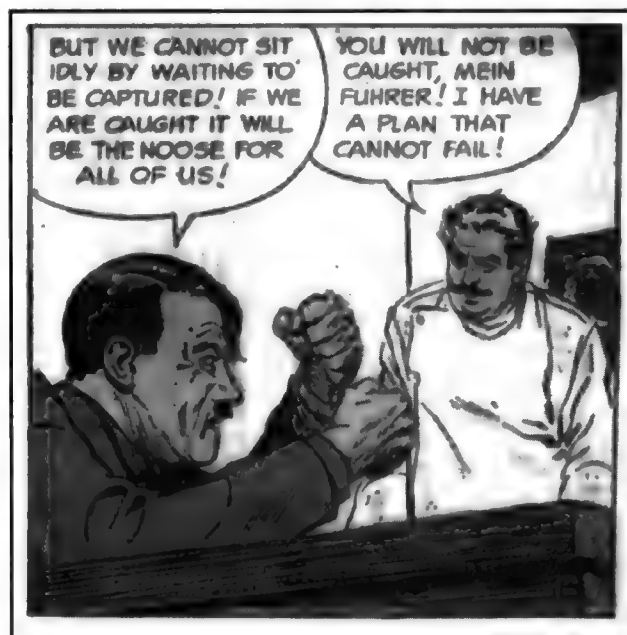
released in 1983, comprised of four vignettes, which included, among others, directors Steven Spielberg and John Landis as well as actors John Lithgow, Dan Ackroyd, and Albert Brooks. CBS tried a second series for television which ran from 1985 to 1987. Initially it was successful but interest gradually dropped off.

The Twilight Zone would also return to comics in the early 1990s with a series from Now Comics. Although there were some good stories and art, they never really captured the spirit of the television show the way the first series had. (Chances are that wasn't their intent anyway.)

The Twilight Zone has become far more than an old TV show. Its cult following has kept it alive and well in the years since its (and its creator's) passing. Episode guides and biographies of Serling have all been greeted with enthusiasm. *The Twilight Zone* has also been parodied in commercials and other television shows as well. Even the phrase "twilight zone" has itself become a part of everyday language, often denoting the bizarre or unexplained.

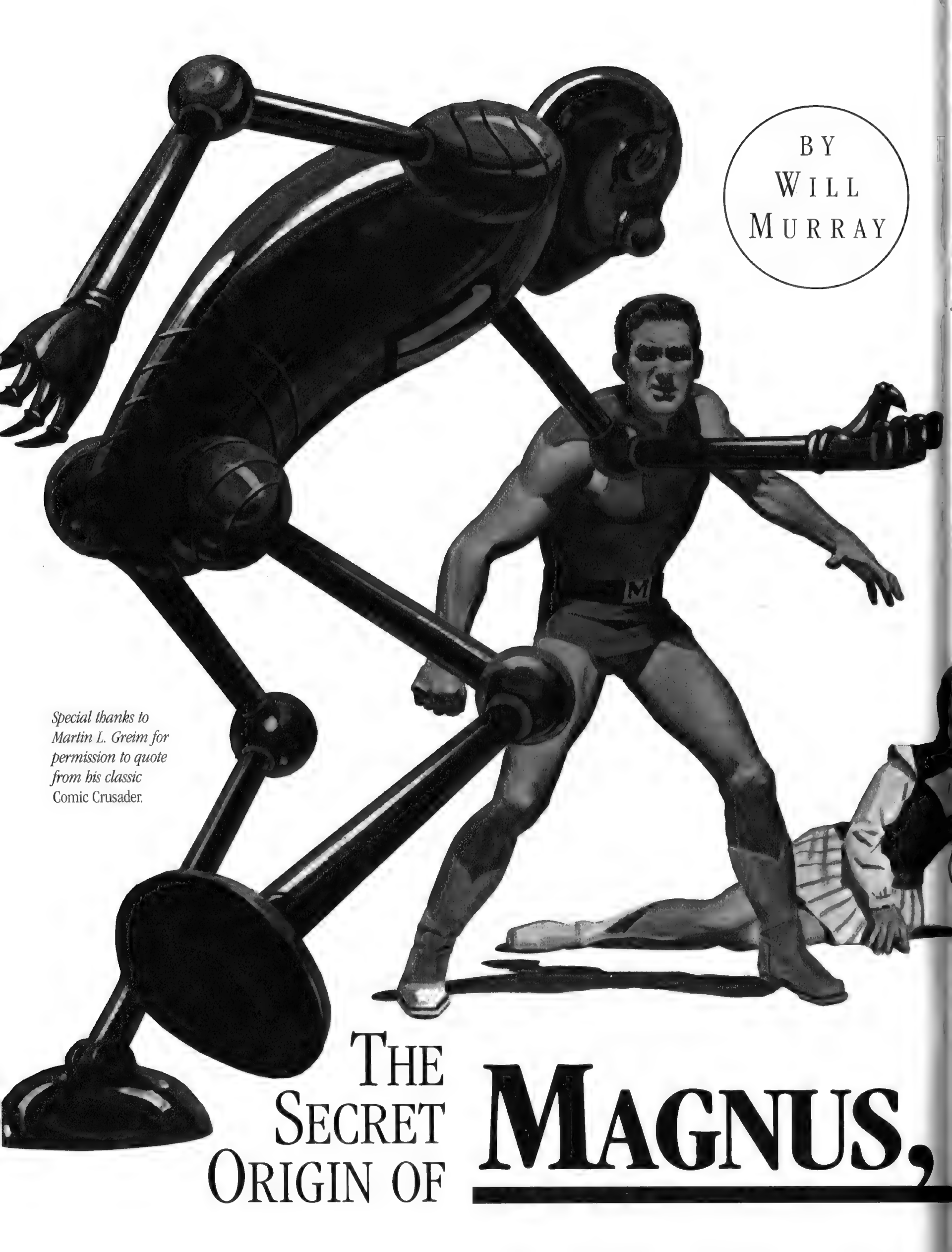
The Twilight Zone comics have also done their part in preserving the show's memory and their very unique nature enables them

overlap several genres of collecting interest. Lately, both fans of comic books as well as those of television memorabilia often put *The Twilight Zone* comics on their want lists. That's probably because the twenty year run of the title still holds collector interest with literally hundreds of well written stories, attractive covers/interior art, and a manageable number of issues than can still be found at reasonable prices. The "dimension of imagination" found a wonderful and collectible home in comic books that will be appreciated well into the future.



In *Four Color* #1288, Mein Fuhrer becomes the incredible shrinking Hitler in a plot to save Nazi leaders during the last few hours of WWII by placing them in suspended animation.





BY
WILL
MURRAY

*Special thanks to
Martin L. Greim for
permission to quote
from his classic
Comic Crusader.*

THE SECRET ORIGIN OF **MAGNUS,**

If you were reading comic books in 1962, you were privileged to witness a profound alteration of the four-color landscape.

DC Comics was deep into their revival of Silver Age superheroes. The new Flash and Green Lantern were going strong. Aquaman had finally gotten a title named after him. The Atom was about to be awarded his own magazine. And everyone from Green Lantern to Green Arrow seemed to be joining the newly-formed Justice League of America.

Over at Marvel Comics, the success of the JLA-inspired *Fantastic Four* had caused Publisher Martin Goodman to issue *The Incredible Hulk*, and he would soon convert his fantasy monster magazines into superhero vehicles to stake his claim in the changing landscape that year, bringing forth Spider-Man, Thor, and others.

All over the field, comic books were striving for fresh formulas and a new maturity.

Two unique series, very different but strangely parallel, debuted in 1962. The first was Metal Men, unleashed upon the world in *Showcase* #37 (May 1962). In November, Gold Key released *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, cover-dated February, 1963.

Both concepts broke new ground for comic books. *Metal Men* chronicled a tragic band of rebellious too-human robots under the leadership of their inventor, Dr. Will Magnus. While *Magnus, Robot Fighter* was a high-tech exploration of the world of 4000 A.D. where human beings struggled against an over-dependence on their robot servitors, their sole champion trained by a wise old robot to combat the growing machine-inspired tyranny. Both soon outstripped the industry leader, *Superman*, in sales.

Other than the shared theme of the challenge of robot technology, Metal Men and Magnus, Robot Fighter, were as different as day and night. Artist Russ Manning presented a vision of far future robotics as cold and polished as chromium, while the artistic team of Ross Andru and Mike Esposito offered a grimly chiaroscuro view of early post-Industrial robot technology. Forty years later, both series are fondly remembered by fans who note the strange coincidence of two heroes named Magnus and their struggles with the robots of their day, two millennia apart.

A strange coincidence that may not be such a coincidence, after all.

To understand their shared destiny, we must go back to the origin of Magnus, Robot Fighter, which fortunately was recorded not long after the character was launched and memories

were still fresh. Fan John McGeehan solicited from Magnus artist Russ Manning a lengthy account of the genesis of the unique character, which originally ran in Glen Johnson's *The Comic Reader* #28, in 1964. It began: "In March 1962," Manning wrote, "Jack Taylor, Art Director, Whitman Pub. Co., mentioned in passing, that the company was considering a comic book with the story laid in 4000 A.D., and that I was being considered as the illustrator. Intrigued, I went to Chase Craig's office and asked about it."

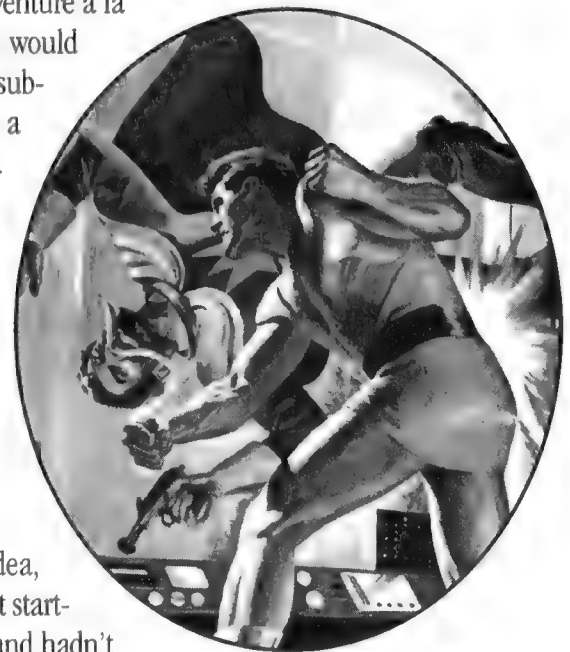
Craig was editor-in-chief of Gold Key's west coast comics division, for which Manning was drawing "Brothers of the Spear" and other features.

"Chase showed me a letter he had sent to the head office and various department heads," continued Manning. "I do not know how much discussion Chase had had with the others prior to this letter, but the letter seemed to imply that the origin of the idea was Chase's. The points that Chase's letter marked were that comic book readers seem to be buying subjects not possible (because of cost, etc.) on TV. 4000 A.D.

would be a science-fiction adventure à la *Jetsons*, only realistic. Robots would have become the master race, subordinating man. The hero would be human, would lead the resistance, would find literature, etc., from the 20th century that would inspire the humans. The letter was dated February 26, 1962."

The first Metal Men story had just appeared in *Showcase* with a January 30, 1962 on-sale date.

"After discussing the idea, Chase stated that they had just started thinking about the book, and hadn't assigned a writer. I told him of my reading in science-fiction and asked to be allowed to make a stab at it. He handed me the above-mentioned letter, and the script for the movie that had just been made of H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*. Whitman had done the comic book adaptation of that movie (illoded by Al Toth) and Chase stated that that format was along the lines he had been considering, only with Robots. I said that my first impression would be to make this 4000 A.D. hero a Tarzan of the future... man at his simplest. Chase said it sounded good and to 'op to it! I headed for the nearest beer and



ROBOT FIGHTER!

MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER!

relaxed in a glow of euphoria... a whole, brand-new hero and world to create... almost carte blanche! *Man!*"

Manning's first instinct, to create a Tarzan of the future, was a sound commercial one. Tarzan was one of Gold Key's consistent best-sellers under writer Gaylord DuBois and artist Jesse Marsh. Manning had occasionally drawn the Ape Man's adventures, and his "Brothers of the Spear" had been running in its back pages since 1952.

"Shortly, I submitted a two page layout describing the world

ter inspired mostly by Maximus in Mary Perkins, *On Stage*, strip.) Chase and his assistant, Zetta DeVoe, went over my layout, made suggestions and changes, and chose Magnus as the new hero's name."

Note that Manning qualifies the Maximus influence with the word "mostly." It's a strange character to inspire a futuristic hero like Magnus. Leonard Starr's Maximus was a very theatrical personage, a faceless individual who is a direct steal from the Phantom of the Opera. And as we'll see, Manning might not have been revealing the full truth behind the name Magnus.

One early conceptual misfire was abandoned early on—the great stone hammer designed for robot smashing.

"In writing the synopsis," Manning explained, "I discussed the new hero with Dodie, wife, help-mate, and she suggested doing away with the kookie hammer, and maybe having him karate the robots, or leap up on their shoulders and *unscrew* their heads! I laughed deprecatingly at the unscrew bit, and sneakily adopted her superb 'bare hand against robot metal' idea... and must certainly give her credit for what I feel is surely one of the deepest felt reasons for reader association with the Robot Fighter."

It was fortunate that Manning rethought the hammer. With Magnus debuting months after the first Marvel Thor, the coincidence would have struck comics readers of the time as a cheap and deliberate imitation.

Russ Manning is remembered today for his etched-in-steel artistic interpretation of *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, but few know that he scripted many of those classic episodes, beginning with the origin. In fact, he had earlier scripted *Tarzan* and *Dale Evans* comic books.

"I then submitted a synopsis for a 27 page script which Chase and Zetta and I, in conference, went over thoroughly," Manning related in 1963. "I was given the go-ahead to write the actual script, and did so. Again, Chase, and Zetta tore into it, and made suggestions that, when written into the script, did wonders for. Then came the day when they said it was ready for illustration."

Here, Manning encountered his first serious stumbling block.

"I had submitted costume and character studies to Chase, and these boiled down to two... a pair of trunks, red, of the material his whole suit is now, and a pair of soles that stuck to the bottom of this feet (no straps), and nothing else. The second costume was a sleeveless jump-suit like everyone else wears in the book. We chose the trunks, as being more distinctive and simple. I then illoed the whole 27 pages with Magnus in a pair of metal-mesh trunks and strapless sandals."

It's disconcerting to think of the heroic Magnus attired in nothing more than a futuristic loincloth, but that's how Manning originally conceived him.

"The artwork went back east, and bounced back with a request to put some clothes on the guy. Tarzan could go around bare-chested because of the Jungle (Continued on page 31)



MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER © WESTERN PUBLISHING

A close-up of the original painting used as the cover art on *Magnus, Robot Fighter* #3 (Aug 1963)

of 4000 A.D., and a hero, as I pictured and thought of them," recounted Manning. "I personally rejected the world as *Time Machine* showed it... too wishy-washy... and instead, pictured it much as the comic book shows it now. But the hero, still a Tarzan of the future, had a gimmick... a great stone hammer, slung at his waist, which he used to overpower robots. Had Thor (Marvel) been originated then?"

In fact, in another curious Magnus coincidence, Thor was at that approximate time being developed by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. *Journey Into Mystery* #83 had an on-sale date of June 5, 1962, which meant it was being produced around March or April. Manning was obviously not influenced by the Jack Kirby revision of the Norse god of thunder.

"At any rate, I hadn't seen it at that time," he noted. "The names submitted were *Hammer*, *Mann* and *Magnus* (this lat-

THE ALIENS!

Buried in the back pages of *Magnus, Robot Fighter* lay a unique four-page SF series, also the creation of Russ Manning. The Aliens chronicled the first encounter between an earth space exploration team led by Captain Johner and the crew of an alien spaceship, and how the two very different races dealt with the tricky and dangerous problem of first contact.

The Aliens ran in every issue of *Magnus* for as long as new *Magnus* stories were being done. While the series never graduated to its own book, the early stories were later collected in a 1967 Gold Key special edition, *The Aliens*. A minor classic, this memorable series was amazingly first intended as a one-shot—a simple SF tale with a surprise ending.

"After finishing the first *Magnus* story," Manning recounted to *Comic Crusader*, "I was asked to write and draw a non-hero four-pager, with a future setting. The deadline as very tight, so I used a concept I'd been strongly impressed with when reading [Murray] Leinster's version in the '40s. ['First Contact'] So, too, was someone at EC. Evidently Chase liked the concept enough to ask the writers of *Magnus* #2 to use the same setting and characters."

Eric Friewald and Robert Shaefer carried the series forward over Manning's crisp art until issue #6's "A Case of Nerves."

Manning's solution to the problem of



LEFT: Time itself becomes visible and tangible as Capt. Johner, Reema, and friends begin one of their most fantastic adventures in *Magnus* #20 (Nov 1967).

BELOW: Earthlings visit the Alien planet in *Magnus* #8 (Nov 1964). BELOW LEFT: Johner and Zarz successfully disarm the ZFX missile in *MRF* #4 (Nov 1963)



how to deal with the first contact with an alien spaceship was novel. Johner and his alien counterpart, Zarz, agree to exchange crew members, who will then journey on to their respective planets as goodwill ambassadors. It was the only reasonable alternative destroying one another rather than risk leading their opposite crew back to their home world and all the unknowable dangers that might entail.

The series followed both mixed-crew ships to their destinations, switching back and forth from episode to episode—an innovation Manning himself inaugurated—focusing on the challenges encountered along the way.

"Each episode was complete in itself until I returned to writing it in *Magnus* #6," Manning explained. "The Aliens occurs in the same future time-stream as does *Magnus*, but whether before or after the *Robot Fighter*, I never decided. The year 4,000 A.D. is, in my opinion, not a reasonable date for the North Am and mileau I created. 2,200 A. D. would seem more accurate, considering the present rate of development toward such a state."

Manning continued writing and drawing *The Aliens* until issue #22, the first to lead off with a reprint. This last Manning installment was ghosted in part by Mike Royer and completely inked by him—a first—when the press of *Tarzan* work proved insurmountable. After that, Paul Norris drew the strip, with Royer inking.

The final Aliens installment appeared in *Magnus, Robot Fighter* #28, the last issue to run an original *Magnus* story.



MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER!

(I guess), but not Magnus! Among the designs for costume I then submitted was the one Magnus now wears *except* that I had indicated blue-black boots. Obviously, the red suit was the one chosen, and I went through the entire artwork, putting Magnus into ceramic-durum. In the margin of the first page artwork, I made color notes to the colorist, calling for red on the suit, red-brown on his hair... and, figuring that no colorist needed a color note to know that boots are either blue-black or dark brown, I made no suggestions for boot color. Hence... no boot color!"

Except on the painted covers, Magnus invariably wore white boots. These covers, by an anonymous New York artist, were in fact executed from Manning sketches, making him co-artist on the Magnus covers, a fact virtually forgotten today.

Manning went on to credit other individuals for realizing Magnus and his milieu, and one in particular.

"I suspect that an absolutely one-man creation is an extreme rarity, and certainly Magnus is not one of the items... quite a number of us worked to hone Magnus into

the more less consistent fellow he is. One more person also added a fine bit... Jesse Marsh, at a dinner party one evening, suggested the train of thought that led to the human-brain computer in the first book. And still unknown: the name of the colorist who digs white boots!"

Others also contributed materially to the formative Magnus. Mike Royer came aboard with issue #12, as art assistant and inker on the back-up strip, "The Aliens." A Burroughs fan, Royer approached Manning for work using a fan-produced comics adaptation of Burroughs' *Wizard of Venus* and was taken on part-time. With #13, Royer had moved up to assisting Manning on *Korak* and *Magnus*, essentially inking backgrounds. He would remain with the feature even after Manning himself had departed it.

While Manning scripted Magnus's origin, the early issues were team-scripted by Eric Friewald and Robert Shaefer, with writers like Herb Castle and Don R. Christiansen supplementing Manning

in later issues. Manning frequently rewrote these scripts.

Surprisingly, most of the great Magnus villains were the work of writers other than Russ Manning—although he was not shy about reviving them. Mekman of issue #2's "Operation Disguise," came from Shaefer and Friewald. The next issue introduced Magnus's greatest foe, the walrus-mustached Xyrkol, again from the team of Shaefer and Friewald. Manning himself teamed Xyrkol with his own creation, the evil robot planet, Malev-6 in issue #7's "The Power of One Thousand." Herb Castle created the mildly malevolent Dr. Laszlo Noel for issue #13, "The Evil Ark of Dr. Noel." The only villain to out-Magnus the Robot Fighter on the subject of doing away with robots, Dr. Noel wanted to eradicate them completely. Even Magnus wouldn't go that far!

Early on, Chase Craig had wanted Manning to create a running robot supervillain who would be the architect and overlord of the robot rule over humans, but Manning resisted that idea, replacing it with the more scaled-down and flexible concept that humans were becoming too reliant on robots and were themselves ceding control to machines without understanding the consequences.

"Chase's plans to use robot villains remained," Manning told Bob Cosgrove and Martin L. Greim of *Comic Crusader* in 1974, "but I suggested the necessity of most of the robot evilness being the result of human perversion of them... or some other logical cause. Robots, being machines, would logically be no more capable of evil than this typewriter... but the *human* manipulating it is. This more realistic background for the stories helped their success, I'm sure. However, the man-versus-machine thrust of the comic was Chase's idea... and this is surely the main reason the comic appealed to so many people at that time."

By his own account, Manning chafed under some of the scripts he was given to draw. He was involved with Friewald and Shaefer on issue #2's "Operation Disguise," but for a while focused exclusively on his art, later returning to write and draw such early exploits as "The Immortal One," "The Power of One Thousand" and "Havoc at Weather Control."

"If I had written all of the stories," Manning told the *Comic Crusader*, "the locale probably would have remained North Am and/or space... since the possibilities inherent in just those two areas would never have been exhausted. Other writers brought in the other locales... possibly to avoid understanding North Am, and using it within the perimeters of its original conception. I submitted several pages of written material on Magnus and North Am, before writing the first book; which, with Chase's ideas, 'set' the North Am and Magnus milieu."

Of the 21 Russ Manning-illustrated *Magnus, Robot Fighters* published between 1962 and 1967, Manning scripted or co-scripted 11 of them—just more than half.

But one writer, largely unknown and unsung, also contributed to *Magnus, Robot Fighter* during the Manning era.

Today, Richard Kyle is remembered for his award-winning



Mogul Badur, ruler of the ancient city of Sarkorum, pits Magnus against his "Z" robots on the cover of MRF #15 (Aug 1966).

fanzine, *Graphic Story World*, for co-publishing the first "graphic novel," George Metzger's *Beyond Time and Again*, and for his revival of *Argosy* a few years ago—which printed Jack Kirby's "Street Code" for the first time.

Then, Richard Kyle was one of the founders of comics fandom. Along with Glen Johnson, publisher of *The Comic Reader*, Bill Spicer, editor of *Fantasy Illustrated*, and Rick Durrell, an early comics collector from the Los Angeles area, Kyle was invited to Manning's home in rural Orange County for one of the first pro/fan comics gatherings. Manning was something of a fan himself, having done covers for *The Fantasy Advertiser* fan magazine in his art-student days.

Manning and Kyle hit it off—they found they shared a common interest in science fiction among other things—and Kyle became a regular visitor to the artist's Modjeska Canyon home and studio. Over time, this led to his being invited to contribute to the series.

"I liked *Magnus*," Kyle recalls. "It was much more grown-up than most comic books of the time. Russ was aiming for a young adult audience. And he made every effort to give the strip technological plausibility. For example, there was a talking dog named Jak in one of the stories, and Russ, knowing that a dog is physically incapable of human speech, invented a 'voder' for him which converted dog sounds into English. Also, in virtually all science fiction comics, individual jet packs allow people to fly horizontally, *à la* the Rocketeer. Well, Russ knew that in reality anybody who wore 'em would nosedive right into the ground since there were no lifting surfaces involved. So Russ' flying outfits had supporting jets that were directed downward. The other writers—all very talented professionals—were essentially juvenile writers, not familiar with real SF. Russ couldn't write them all or edit them all, yet he was dissatisfied with the scripts he was getting."

As a matter of fact, Manning had grown up reading *Astounding Science Fiction*, was a big fan of A. E. van Vogt and Isaac Asimov (interests that earned him the nickname of "Moon Boy") and he credited slick advertising artists and *Amazing Stories* pulp illustrator Robert Gibson Jones with inspiring the gleaming vertical wonderland that was North Am.

It was after Manning had scripted the 8th issue, "Havoc at Weather Control," that Kyle came in.

"According to Russ, his original outline for 'Havoc' had too many subplots," Kyle recalls. "And he said that eliminating the unnecessary ones had given him fits—I seem to remember seeing a preliminary outline that even included Cat-Men from Mars, among other things. However, by the time Russ was done, the script was the most

mature and well-written of any Magnus to date. 'Havoc' was a strong young adult story, and one the older readers could enjoy.

"It was the first time Russ really had all the elements together. Or maybe it was the first one he had sufficient personal control over. In any case, that issue made a believer out of me," Kyle says. "Although I had no interest in doing stories with the fake science of most comic book stories, I really wanted to do stories set in Russ' North Am. I mentioned some plot ideas to him, using real science-fictional backgrounds, and Russ put me in touch with Chase Craig right away."

Over time, Kyle wrote one issue in its entirety, made major contributions to two others, and remembers contributing fragments to two or three more. He suspects he even inspired the title to one story.

"However, it all came about in an odd way," he recounts. "At Russ' urging, I submitted maybe a half-dozen outlines to Chase, including two that particularly interested me—'The Boy Who Hated Magnus' and 'The Puppet Masters of North Am.'"

"While the outlines were in the mail, I started writing 'The Boy Who Hated Magnus' on spec. I liked its premise the best. The main supporting characters were an alienated boy-genius I called Dan and Jak, his mutant talking dog, both born into the future's equivalent of today's big city ghettos, the lowest level of the continent-spanning city of North Am. The boy was constructing super-robots from discarded robot

parts—the way teenagers used to build hot rod cars—and planning a one-boy war on the upper levels, the so-called 'cloud-cloddies.' Eventually, he and Magnus become friends.

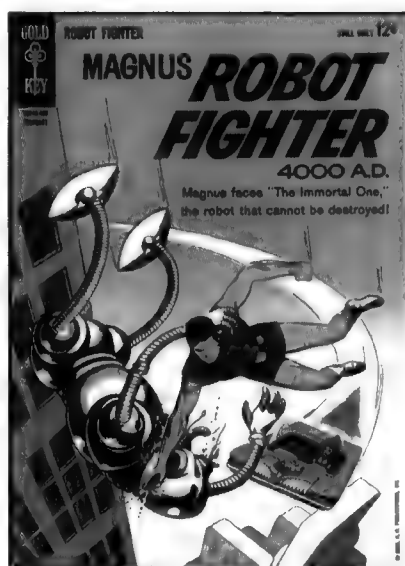
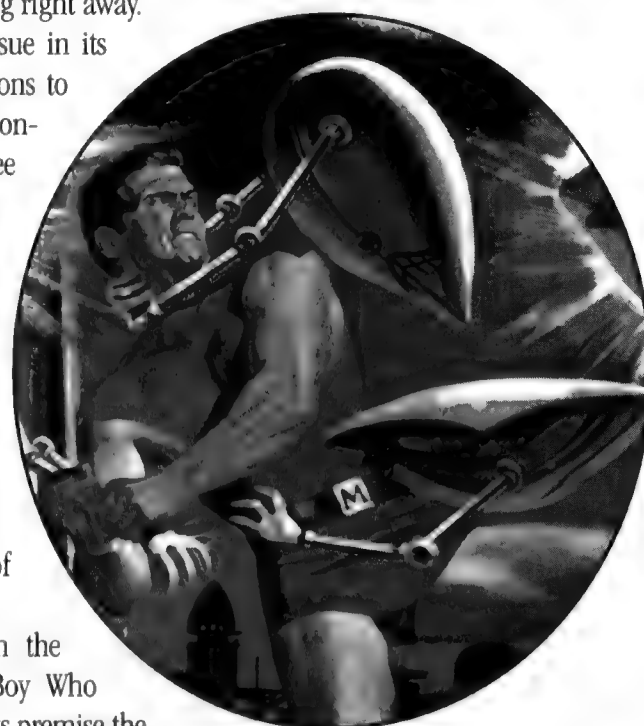
"When I was about halfway through, Chase told me he liked the outlines. However, he wanted the Puppet Masters story first, so I put the 'junkrob' story aside and went to work. The first third of the script went fine. I got the okay to do the rest and I began the final draft. And that's where the problems began.

"Puppet Masters of North Am' was about a future 'live' theater in which 20-foot-tall marionettes—robots—perform immense epic dramas in stadiums the size of football fields. This

particular play featured Genghis Khan and his army. And of course something goes wrong and they attempt to conquer North Am.

"Now, in the arena, there was a protective force field between the audience and the 'players'. Fires were raging on stage.

A closeup of Magnus fighting invading mini-robots from Sirius on the cover of *Magnus* #40 (Aug 1975)



Magnus uses his fists and his wits to fight Sigma the immortal robot in *MRF* #5 (Feb 1964).

MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER!

Missiles—lances, axes, arrows, everything—were hurtling off the shield. It was like a 3-D film that had become real. Then, in the key sequence, the force field collapses and the robots pour out of the arena and into the audience.

"As I was writing this, a neighbor came to the door. He told me to turn on my television. The Watts riots had begun. It seemed like half of L.A. was in flames!

"So there I was writing the story, and behind me on the TV the city was burning. As the night wore on I got really troubled, because what was happening and what I was writing were virtually the *same*. I began to think about creative responsibility in a way that I hadn't before.

"I ended up changing the story, and not for the better. Chase didn't care for it, understandably. If you are going to do that kind of story, then it has to be done right. And it wasn't right. He asked for a revision. But what it came down to was that I didn't want to do that kind of story anymore.

"Another problem was that Chase and I didn't mesh creatively. He's a good man and a good editor—but not a good editor for me. When you're doing a series, I like to talk to an editor and get a sense of what he wants to do and what he thinks of the character. It wasn't that Chase was negative about my suggestions, it was that there was no feedback at all. So I decided against doing more work. Chase asked if I wanted to

sell him the story rights to the plots, but I said no. At that time, I was considering turning them into actual science fiction stories—I think they would have made good young adult novels. Chase seemed a little surprised at that but he sent them back.

Kyle smiles reflectively and adds: "And then some of those ideas began to trickle out in new *Magnus* stories, anyway. 'A few months later, 'Beasts of Steel,' scripted by Manning, appeared in *Magnus* #11. This was the story that introduced Danae and her intelligent neo-animals. It was followed by a sequel of sorts, issue #16's 'Cloud Cloddie, Go Home!' told from the standpoint of the Gophs, people living in the lower level of North Am. It introduced the kid genius, Spikey, whom Kyle

thinks was called Dan in his version, and featured the return of the neo-animals. Between them, they used up what remained of the 'Boy Who Hated Magnus' plot.

"The *Magnus* stories were premise-driven, like most science fiction, not character-driven, the way most series characters are," explains Kyle. "Russ was one of those writers who borrow from everybody, but usually don't remember who or where. Jack Kirby borrowed a lot, but he usually knew his source.

When I decided I couldn't work with Chase, I just gave Russ the storyline. So when I saw 'Beasts of Steel' I wasn't surprised. I was disappointed that he'd eliminated the relationship of the boy and the dog. But I was pleased because he'd created a substantially new story—and a very good one—using part of 'The Boy's' premise. He did introduce this female character named Danae, this little girl who was really based on Russ's own daughter, Melissa. I seem to remember that Danae had taken some of Dan's place in that story. Just dawned me: Her name is Danae because it's a feminine version of Dan. Never realized it.

"But I was really disheartened by 'Cloud-Cloddie,' which used the rest of the premise, and not as well as I had—even though it's a good story. I suspect, too, maybe paranoically, that the title of 'Weird World of Mogul Badur' in *Magnus* #15, which has no plot similarities with 'Puppet Masters,' was some kind of feeble switch on my original idea. And I seem to remember bits and pieces in other issues—but who knows? Mainly it taught me that other people have ears, too."

Having closed the door on further direct involvement with *Magnus*, Kyle was content to return to the role of fan and reader. But he was called back for another shot at *Magnus* near the end of Manning's tenure on the book. It came about as a direct result of Manning's growing involvement with *Tarzan*. Manning had replaced Jesse Marsh on Gold Key's *Tarzan* comic book in 1965. Then in 1967, he was asked to take over United Feature's daily *Tarzan* syndicated strip, with the Sunday page falling to him a year later.

"What happened was Russ was working on *Tarzan*," Kyle recalls. "And it was a tremendous amount of work because I think by that time he was both writing and drawing the *Tarzan* newspaper strip. He had been planning to end his work on *Magnus* and then devote himself entirely to *Tarzan*. The trouble was that he'd already accepted payment for a final *Magnus* script, and it was just so time-consuming that he didn't have time for it. So he got in touch with me, asked me if I would write the script. I agreed to, of course. And he planned to draw it."

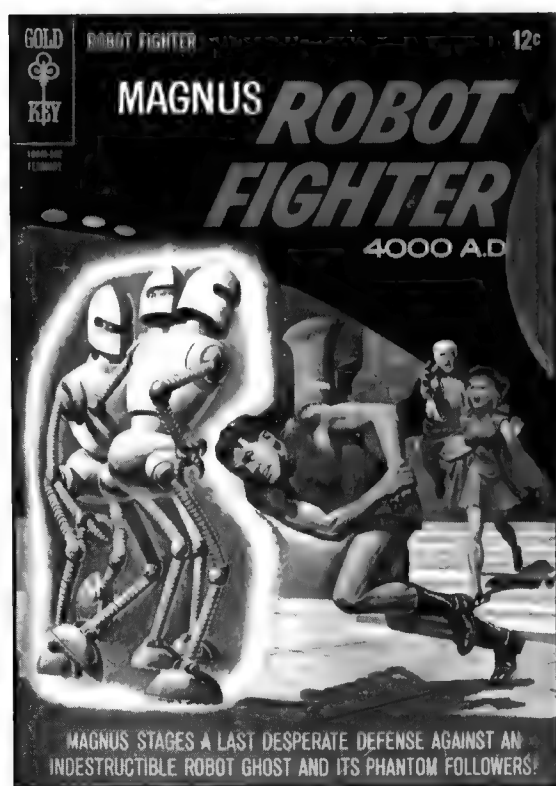
The story was called "The Pied Piper of North Am." It was intended as a direct sequel to issue #21's "Space Spectre," in which *Magnus* battled the weird triumvirate of Xyrkol, Dr. Noel, and Malev-6. At the climax, *Magnus* vowed to hunt down and finally annihilate the robot planet. This would be the payoff.

Kyle also saw it as an opportunity to tie up a lot of the series' loose ends.

"I thought Russ did a very, very good job on the scripts, and *Magnus* was very well drawn. He missed some things about it, which was really the reason that I did what was to be Russ's final story, 'The Pied Piper of North Am.' I put Spikey into that, and the talking dog. I'd liked both of those characters, and I didn't think Russ had done enough with them. Not because of what was done in with the earlier story, but because he hadn't followed up on it. Russ had a curious characteristic. He did the stories as though they were one-shots. In 'Havoc at Weather

BELOW AND
FACING PAGE:

Even *Magnus*'s
steel-smashing
strength is unable
to penetrate the
mystery that veils
the evil robots of
Nadmot! in *MRF* #9
(Feb 1965)



Control,' he introduced this group of teenagers called the Outsiders. They were well-conceived characters, but Russ never used them again. And when we would ask, 'Why not do that?' Well, he'd done it once and now had no interest. He had a couple of villains that returned, but most of the stories were complete in themselves. But the book would have been a lot more successful if he'd used all his characters. And also had more running characters. Although he was not particularly good at inventing villains, Russ created many outstanding sympathetic characters—much like Edgar Rice Burroughs.

"The Pied Piper of North Am' was intended specifically for Russ because it wrapped up the storyline of this villain, Dr. Noel. He was this guy who was a running villain who was anti-Magnus and anti-robot and anti-high technology. He ran through a variety of the stories as an opponent. So I wanted to complete the cycle, by making him change sides. To become an adherent of Magnus, instead of an opponent. And I wanted to bring back Spikey and the dog, and there were several other things that I wanted to bring together. When I told him the outline, Russ thought it was a good idea. He didn't make any suggestions about plotting or characterization or anything like that. Except that he seemed to favor playing up Leeja's role and diminishing Magnus'—almost as though he'd already stepped aside as his creator. So I then wrote the script, and sent it over to him. He okayed it himself, and sent it to Chase Craig, for Chase's approval. I was working for Russ. He was working for Chase. And Chase okayed it."

Unfortunately, the press of Tarzan work proved too daunting. Evidently, Gold Key was sufficiently anxious for Manning to wrap up his Malev-6 storyline that they scheduled a reprint of Magnus's origin in issue #22. But even that wasn't enough. Dan Spiegel filled in with a tale called "Mission: Disaster" for #23. But even with *Magnus's* quarterly schedule, Manning couldn't pull it off.

"The time was just too tight for him, and so it became Paul Norris's first Magnus," Kyle laments. "Dan Spiegel had done his Magnus story mainly as a favor to Gold Key, but was too busy with *Space Family Robinson* to take over."

This transition marked not only the end of Russ Manning's involvement with *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, but Richard Kyle's, as well.

"Chase got in touch with me and asked if I would write more scripts, but I had seen Paul Norris' work on the one I'd done. I lost all feeling for it. The art of it wasn't there. The imagination wasn't there. There would in no point to it. Norris didn't have an authentic science-fictional imagination. I know that sounds odd because he drew science fiction strips like *Brick Bradford*, but he'd become low-tech with the years, though he remained a proficient mainstream artist. He wasn't convincing any more. It was comic book stuff. In the first comic, he was surprisingly faithful to Manning. Then in the subsequent issues he started drawing it in an increasingly cartoonish style."

Strangely enough, Craig asked Kyle to return to the original



Magnus plots that had gone "unused" after the problem with "The Puppet Masters of North Am."

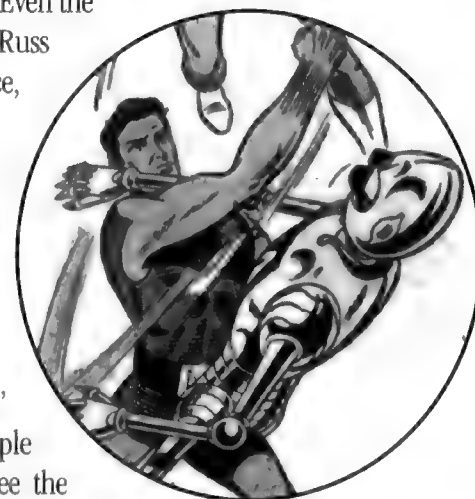
"Because he liked 'Pied Piper of North Am', Chase suggested I write scripts from these previous plot outlines. And he wanted me to do the story that was related to 'Beasts of Steel'—'The Boy Who Hated Magnus.' I said, I couldn't do that because Russ had already done it in 'Cloud-Cloddie', with my permission. The next time I talked to Russ he said something about Chase wanting me to do those scripts, particularly this one. I said, 'I couldn't possibly write it as it stands because you already used it for "Cloud-Cloddie, Go Home!"'

"Russ seemed amazed and started going over the story. Russ said, 'What about this plotpoint?' I said, 'Yeah.' 'And this plot element?' And I said, 'Yeah, that's in there too.' He seemed to be really astonished by it—truly astonished. Then we came to the junkrobs. Spikey built *junkrobs* out of used robot parts the way kids used to build hotrod cars. And so Russ said, 'Even the junkrobs?' a little plaintively. And I said, 'Yeah.' Russ and I looked at each other for a minute in silence, then we both laughed. That's life."

It's unfortunate that things didn't work out, because Kyle had further ideas for the series, all incorporating Manning's many secondary characters like Danae, Willo Talltree, Dr. Noel, Spikey, and Jak.

"The thing about Magnus that bothered me is that it could have been a much better series," he says. "Mainly because there were other people than Russ working on it. Too, I wanted to see the future as an actual setting. I had other stories in mind. There was a story set at a Solar System Fair—like a world's fair where million-year-old Martian robots are reactivated. Then there was another about sea farming—using the seas to raise crops. It was all being robot-tended, and North Am's food supply was being cut off. I'd like to have done another version of the 'Puppet Masters' story. And I had other ideas. But the idea

In MRF #28 (Nov 1969), Magnus fights 1A, the wise robot who raised and trained him from childhood.



MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER!

of building a real future that might actually work was what I was into. To be honest, I wasn't that much interested in destroying robots as the whole point of the story. I was more interested in writing good YA science fiction. And I think Russ was too. And I think the readers were into reading it."

Magnus did not long survive the loss of its chief writer/artist. After a handful of issues drawn by Paul Norris and inked by Mike Royer to give the art a consistent feel, Gold Key threw in the towel and the title reverted to reprints.

Almost unknown is that fact that Manning made one last valiant attempt to draw another *Magnus* episode.

The final original issue of *Magnus, Robot Fighter* #28, leads off with a story apparently drawn by Paul Norris, "Threat from the Depths," in which *Magnus* battles 1-A, the wise old robot that raised and trained the young orphan *Magnus* to counteract the growing robot threat. Several scattered panels look uncannily like the work of Russ Manning. In fact, they are!

Again, Manning tried to draw a final *Magnus*, but once again, his *Tarzan* burdens prevented the artist from finishing the task. Royer also pitched in on the pencils, but even between them, they couldn't complete the story.

"I did panels spread out which equaled about four pages," Royer explains. "That was the way that Russ worked. He would never start at the top of the page and go to the bottom. He would bounce around. He said that kept the work consistent."

Finally, Paul Norris was brought in to finish up the art, with Royer inking. By this time, Royer was drawing the covers for the New York cover painter whose name he remembers as Anderson. Royer recalls Manning contributed about 3 pages worth of disconnected panels—a sad close to a classic run on the book.

Surprisingly, "Threat from the Depths" and its epilogue "A Secret Kept," were both scripted by Mike Royer, who today can't remember if scripting the feature was his idea or a request from Chase Craig.

On "Threat from the Depths," he says, "I wrote two scripts on that. I sat down and wrote a script as if it were for Marvel Comics. And then I rewrote it so it would be simple-minded Chase Craig/Zetta DeVoe-approved Gold Key. I called it, 'What Price Victory?' because *Magnus* had to fight his creator. And of course, Zetta, who was the office manager, decided that 'Threat from the Depths' was a much more meaningful title."

The end of original *Magnus* stories came suddenly. Royer scripted a follow-up issue which never saw light of day.

"I wrote a second story with Xyrkol in it," he recalls. "It was about *Magnus* and the baby sitters. That was a case of my mother saying, 'Why don't you do a story about evil baby sitters?' The baby sitters were these incredibly beautiful women. The problem for *Magnus* was when he found out who the villains were. It was very hard, because of his training, to hit a woman. They weren't robots with their multi-jointed arms. They were androids. They would say things like, 'Time to eat your supper.' 'Don't forget your milk.' 'I'm going to kill you.' I had fun with that script."

Royer doesn't remember why that issue of *Magnus* was shelved. Only that Paul Norris penciled the baby sitter story, and possibly a second tale to round out the issue because by this time Gold Key required two *Magnus* stories per issue.

"I think without Manning *Magnus* didn't sell that well," he speculates.

Magnus, Robot Fighter continued publication until 1977, another 17 issues, all of them reprints.

Years later, when several Gold Key characters were revived under the

Whitman imprint, new *Robot Fighter* tales began appearing in the back of *Doctor Solar*, written by Roger McKenzie and drawn by Frank Bolle. A new *Magnus* title was promised, but never materialized when the revival line collapsed in 1982. Perhaps it might have been launched with the never-published original contents of *Magnus* #29.

That was the end of *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, until Acclaim reactivated it in 1990. Even then, without Russ Manning, the series never flourished as it had. Manning himself had passed away on December 1, 1981 after a long career but a too-short life, leaving a large body of work that included the *Star Wars* newspaper strip, and one unrealized ambition: to produce *Magnus* graphic novels in the same vein as his popular *Tarzan* books. Gold Key consistently declined the opportunity.

"Russ really liked the strip," Kyle notes. "He and *Magnus* were one and the same. The thing was, *Tarzan* was a more adult character and Russ really wanted to do more serious, adult work. That was his natural audience and that's who he aimed his work at. But he truly liked *Magnus*. An underground comix artist did a parody of *Magnus* called 'Magnut'. Russ did not think it was funny—at all. He had a very clear idea of the character, the things that *Magnus* could do and couldn't. *Magnus* had no psychic powers whatever. Leeja, his girlfriend, did. It was deliberately designed that way for dramatic purposes. *Magnus* would be the John Wayne type, and she would be the more mystical feminine type. I don't recall how often Leeja used her psychic powers, but in the ones that Russ wrote, they occurred at least a couple or three times. Then in 'The Pied Piper of North Am,' she's all-out with them. Incidentally, Leeja's family name was Clane. Russ got it from A.E. van Vogt's *Weapon Makers*. It was the name of the imperial family there."

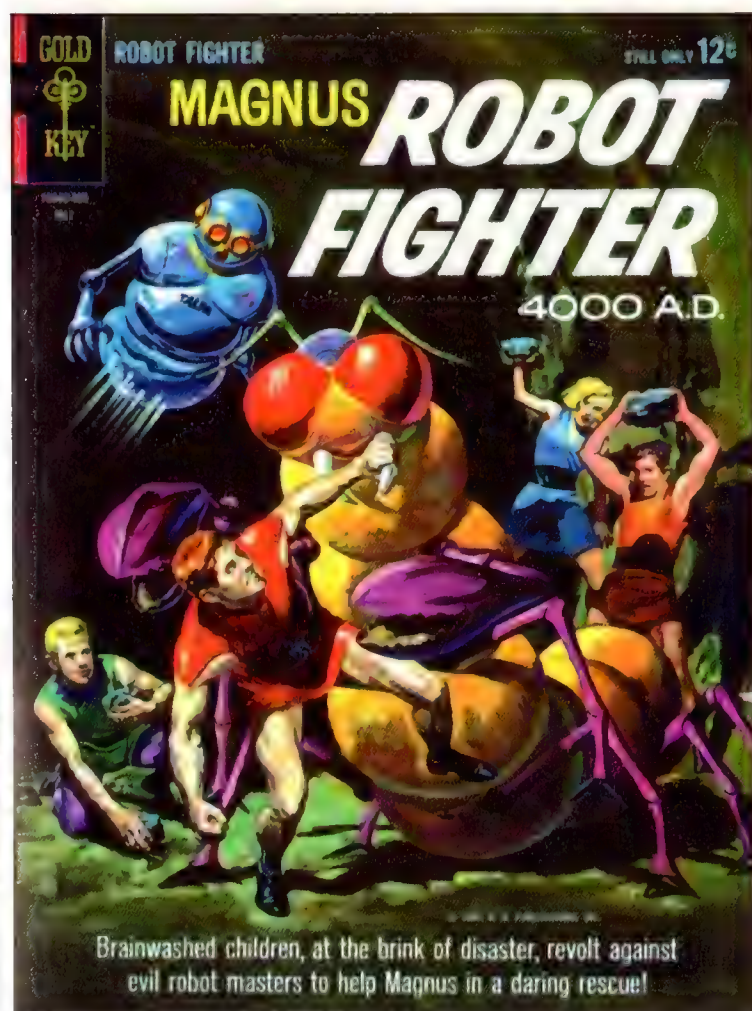
And according to Manning himself, her first name was borrowed from a character named Leej in van Vogt's "Linn" series, so there is a dual explanation for the character's naming.

There's one final piece of the puzzle that was *Magnus, Robot Fighter*. The mysterious coincidence of heroic names and robots. Richard Kyle has a dual explanation for that puzzle too—a startling one.

"Now it's entirely possible that Maximus was in the back of Russ' mind," he readily admits. "It's not like that was untrue. But Russ told Rick and Glen Johnson and Bill and me at that first meeting, with a wink and a finger to lips, that he got it from Doc *Magnus* in DC's *Metal Men*. He may have been casting about for a name, and Maximus was sort of appealing to him, and then he read on to *Metal Men* because he liked the book—and who knows? At that time, *Metal Men* was an innovative comic, psychologically, because that was a very juvenile period in comics, and there was more of an adult concept to *Metal Men*. And Russ liked it. However, according to Russ, no question—he got *Magnus* from *Metal Men*."

Ultimately, both accounts may be grounded in a greater truth than mere influence. Robert Kanigher is on record as saying he took his inspiration from Albertus *Magnus*, the 13th Century Dominican monk who reportedly created robot-like automatons. *Magnus* is Latin for "Great" while "Maximus" means "Greater." Either descriptive perfectly fits *Magnus* the Great, whose like we may never see again. 

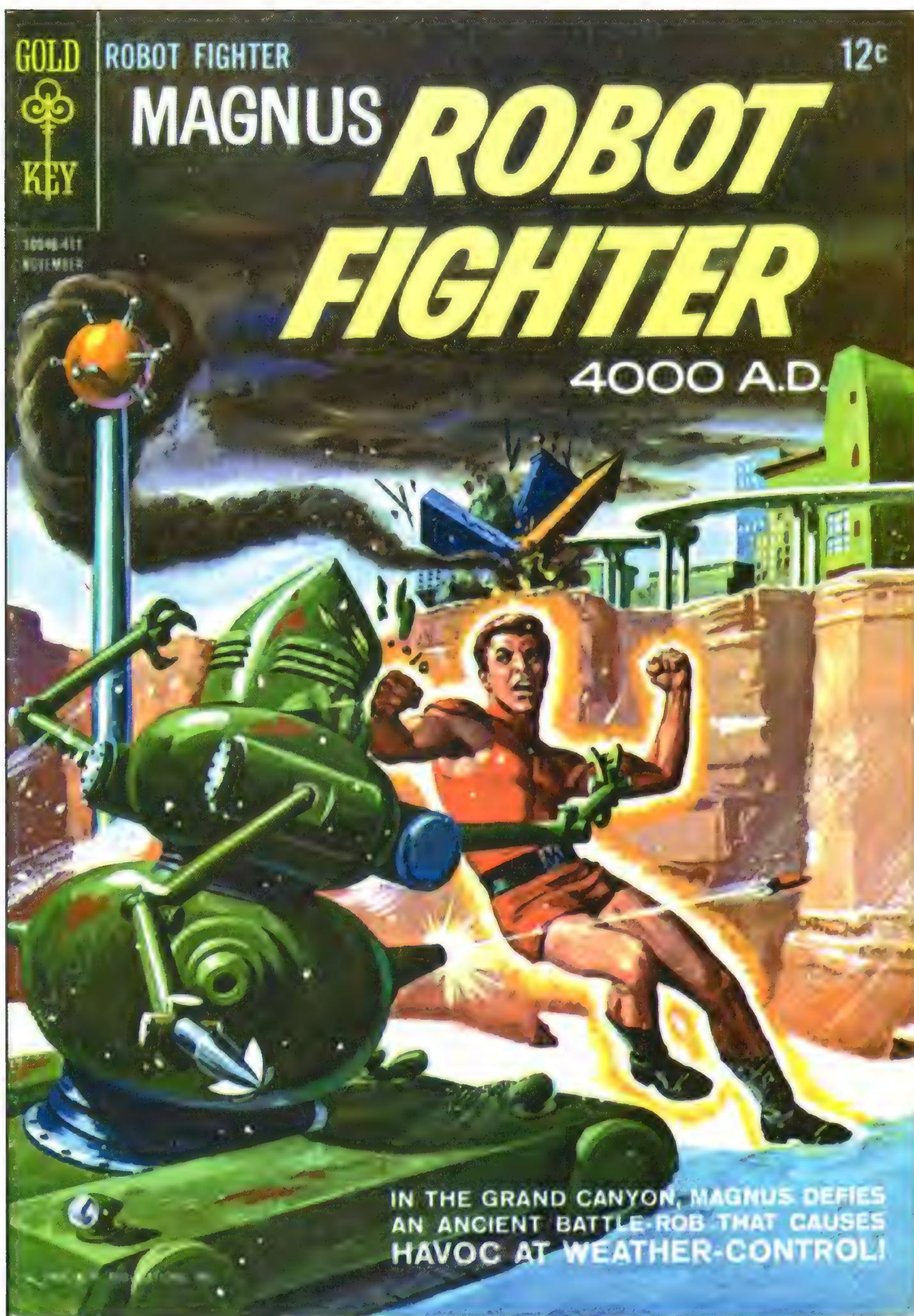
Will Murray's latest novel is Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD: Empyre. He started collecting comics during the Christmas vacation, 1961 and remains a huge fan of the combined works of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko.



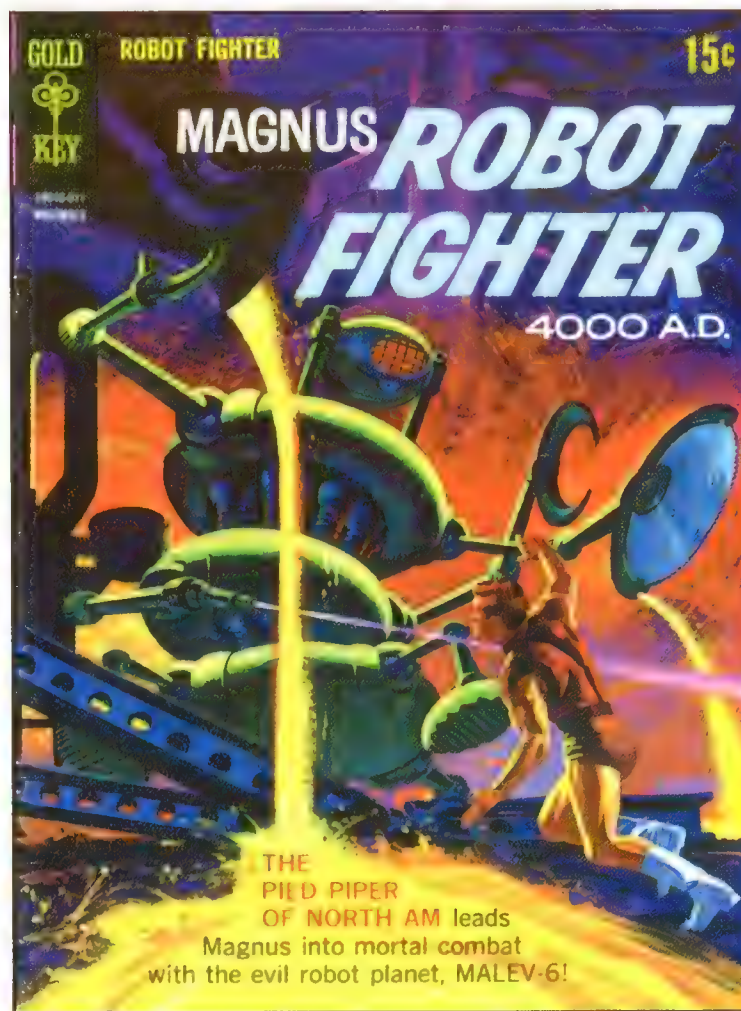
Magnus,
 Robot
 Fighter
 #3
 (Aug 1963)
 #4
 (Nov 1963)
 #6
 (May 1964)
 #7
 (Aug 1964)



MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER



Magnus,
Robot Fighter
#8 (Nov 1964)



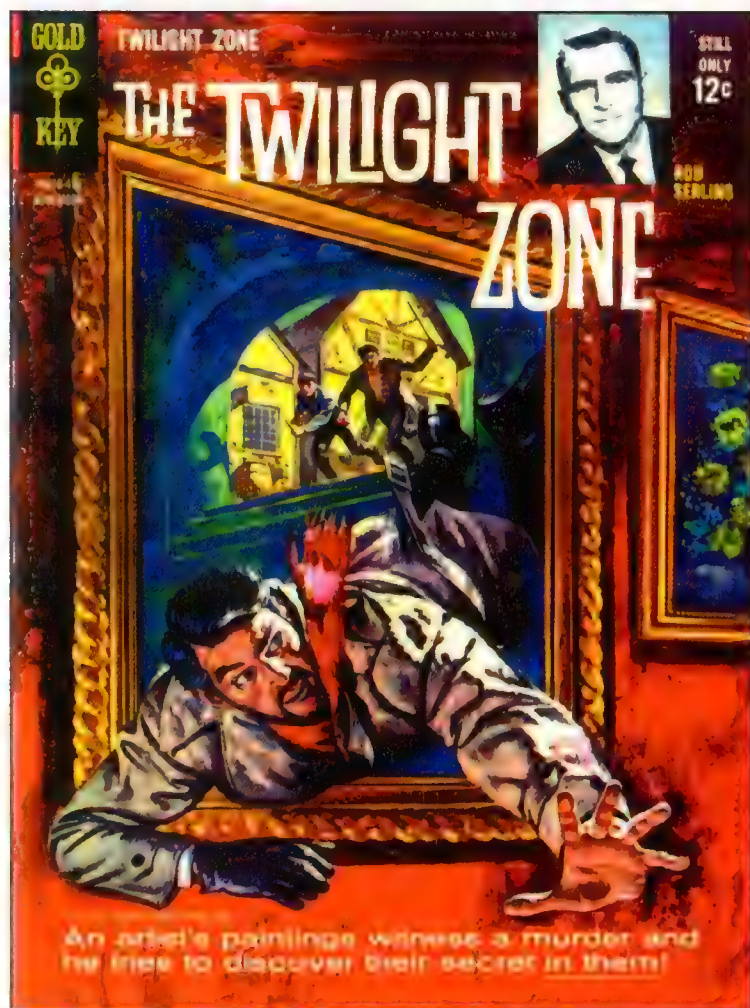
Magnus,
 Robot
 Fighter
 #10
 (May 1965)
 #13
 (Feb 1966)
 #21
 (Feb 1968)
 #24
 (Nov 1968)



T W I L I G H T Z O N E



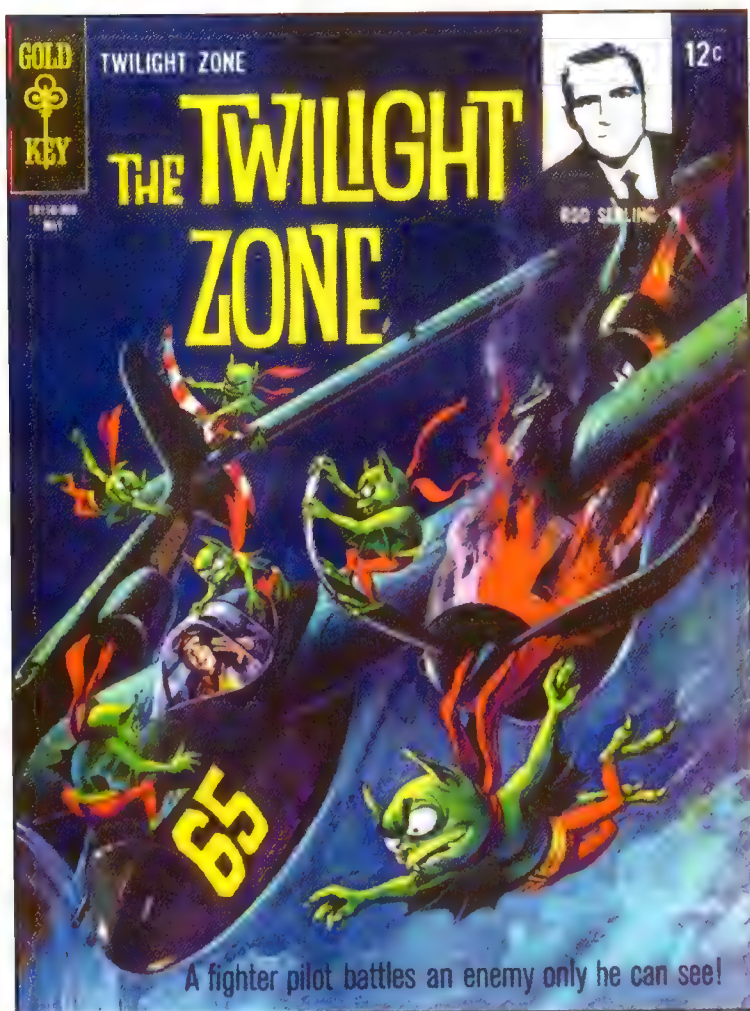
Twilight Zone #3
(May 1963)



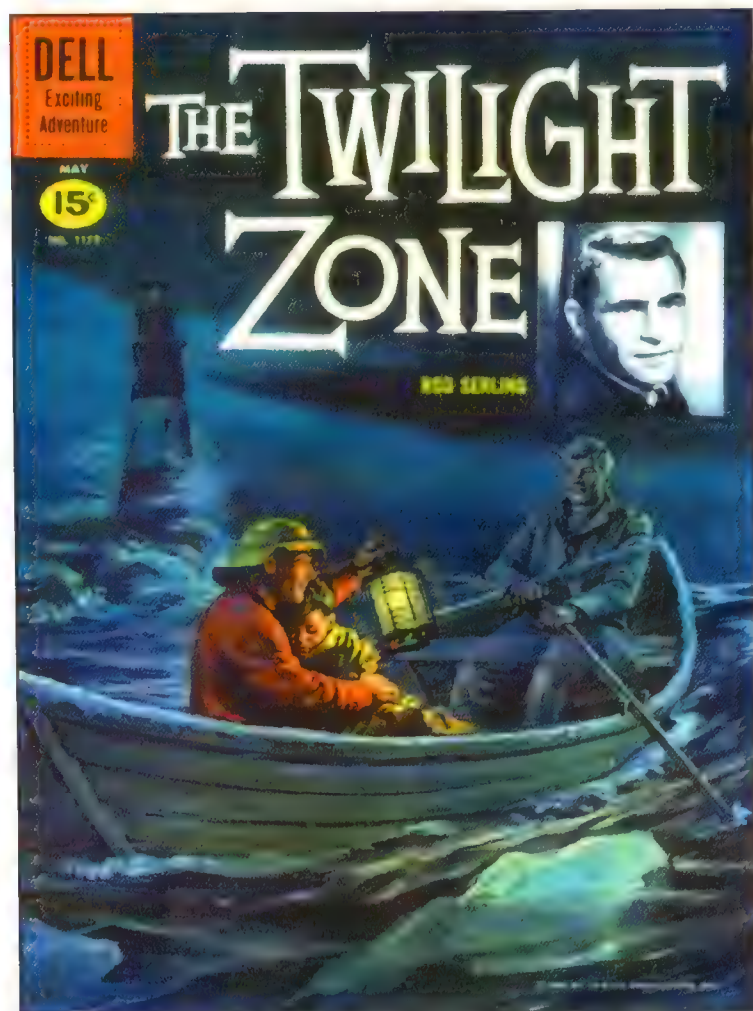
- Twilight Zone #6 (Feb 1964)
- Twilight Zone #8 (Aug 1964)
- Twilight Zone #9 (Nov 1964)
- Twilight Zone #10 (Feb 1965)



T W I L I G H T Z O N E



Twilight
Zone #11
(May 1965)
Where's
William
Shatner?
Twilight
Zone #13
(Nov 1965)
Twilight
Zone #23
(Oct 1967)
Four Color
#1173
(Mar/May
1961)





Four Color #1288
Feb/Apr 1962

Twilight Zone Western Publishing



ROBBY REED, the boy who can change into 1,000 Super-Heroes

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

12¢

JULY
NO. 160

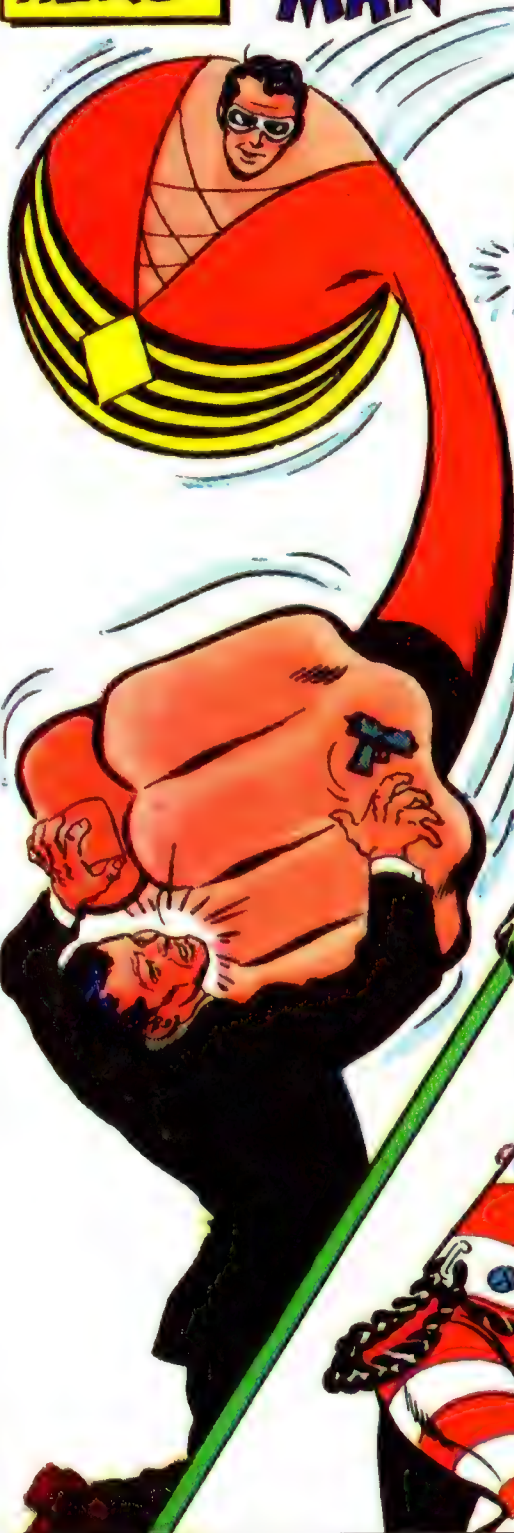
HOUSE of MYSTERY

NEW! THE MOST
ORIGINAL
CHARACTER IN
COMIC HISTORY!



**A NEW
OLD
HERO**

**PLASTIC
MAN**



SOCKAMAGEE!
DIAL IN FOR BLAZING ACTION
AGAINST A DAZZLING VILLAIN..

"The **WIZARD
of LIGHT!**"



**AN OLD
NEW HERO**

GIANTBOY



WAIT'LL YOU
GET A TASTE OF MY
**LICORICE
LARIAT!**

**A NEW
NEW
HERO**

**KING
KANDY**



The World's Weirdest Hero!

When it comes
to the history of

Plastic Man,

DC stands for

Definitely Confusing...

During the Silver Age, Plastic Man popped up in the strangest places. In *House of Mystery* #160 (July 1966, facing page) Dial H For Hero's Robby Reed fought "The Wizard of Light!" as the Golden Age protagonist.



Over the years, DC has acquired numerous properties from other companies and has folded them more or less smoothly into their own universe. (I won't say "seamlessly," as sometimes the seams show quite plainly.) After establishing their own Golden Age characters on Earth-Two, new acquisitions were usually placed on their own worlds in the DC multiverse. Fawcett characters were placed on Earth-S; Quality characters were assigned Earth-X; Charlton characters also got their own Earth, but we didn't get to see it until it was destroyed in the Crisis.

Occasionally established characters were introduced into mainstream Earth-One continuity. An example of this was the Blackhawks, whose 107th issue (December, 1956) was published by Quality, but whose 108th issue (January, 1957) was from DC (then called National).

Plastic Man's transition from Quality was far bumpier, much more confusing, and ultimately involves at least three characters of the name "Plastic Man," none of whom may have been the original.

Plastic Man, of course, was Jack Cole's most famous creation, introduced the first issue of Quality's *Police Comics* (August, 1941). When DC acquired the Quality stable in the late

BY JACK ABRAMOWITZ

World's Weirdest Hero!

1950s, Plas went on the back burner along with Uncle Sam, the Human Bomb, Phantom Lady, and the rest. He didn't pop back out until the superhero revival was well underway in the mid 1960s.

UNLIKELY REVIVAL

The first Silver Age appearance of Plastic Man occurs in the very unlikely *House of Mystery* #160 (July, 1966). But this Plastic Man isn't Cole's Eel O'Brien; it's Robby Reed! In this installment of the "Dial H for Hero" series, the "boy who can change into 1,000 superheroes" discovered that not all of his identities were original (read: lame) like Mighty Moppet or King Kandy. "I've become Plastic Man," Robby exclaims, "that famous crime-fighting hero of years ago!" Plas is also recognized by the crooks and bystanders, establishing that a Plastic Man already existed in whatever universe Robby inhabited—presumably Earth-One.

The "Dial H" version of Plastic Man returned in *Plastic Man* volume 4, number 13 (July, 1978). It seems that Robby Reed, upon hitting puberty, went into a hormone-induced fugue, forgetting his powers. A hog caller cleared his head (don't ask), and he recovered his H dial, wreaking havoc in a variety of super-identities. All of these identities were "repeats" and his H dial didn't even work according to its established protocols (for example, he dialed directly from King Kandy to the Mole to the Human Starfish without becoming Robby in between). Among

the returning identities was Plastic Man and, this being the "real" Plastic Man's comic, the two fought. It should come as no surprise that the original triumphed, keeping the H dial for safe-

keeping. (How the Dial got back into circulation in the DC Universe remains, to my knowledge, undisclosed.)

SON OF PLAS

Let us backtrack and resume tracing the reintroduction of Plastic Man. Following the tryout in *House of Mystery*, Plas scored his own series, but with some interesting changes to his continuity. His costume was subtly altered, introducing red tights in place of his previously bare legs. His supporting cast also changed. Gone was sidekick Woozy Winks, replaced by Gordon K. Trueblood, love interest Micheline ("Mike") de Lute, and arch-nemesis Dr. Dome. The series, which ran ten issues (from November, 1966 until May, 1968) was unremarkable except for two things: the Gil Kane art in the first issue and the continuity explanation in the seventh (December, 1967).

In *Plastic Man* #7, it is revealed that the star of the new series is not the original Quality Comics hero— it is his son! It turns out that Plas, Sr. (Eel) now runs a retirement village called "Plastic Acres," assisted by sidekick Woozy Winks. Plas is showing his age, with graying hair, wrinkles, and an elastic bad back. The origin of Plas, Jr. is also revealed, if not his name. Remember the acid that got into Eel's bloodstream way back in *Police* #1? Apparently he kept a bottle of it on the mantle as a memento. (Aside from just being a stupid thing to do with kids in the house, when did he have time to collect it, what with just having been shot and all? But I digress.) Junior gulped it down and inherited Dad's powers. (A child drinking a bottle of acid as an origin? How did that pass the Comics Code?)

This issue is a continuity hound's dream (or nightmare) but it is barely evident from the cover. A blurb in the lower left reads, "Like father-like son! But with a father like Plastic Man and an uncle like Woozy Winks— like- W-OW-W-W!" Does the cover show Plas Sr. and Plas Jr. Together? Does it show Woozy for whom fans had been clamoring? No, this was DC in the 1960s; the cover shows Plastic Man (Jr.) struggling against a gorilla! Ahhh, gotta love 'dem Silver Age DC monkeys!

This issue represents the beginning of a tradition of junior Plastic Men, continued by Baby Plas in the television cartoons and Offspring in The Kingdom. Despite this monumental achievement (or perhaps because of it!), Plastic Man was canceled following the tenth issue (May, 1968). When the next series began in February, 1976, it resumed the numbering with issue eleven, but reverted to original Plas/Woozy continuity. The new title didn't last too long either, ending after #20, but subsequent Plastic Man series (such as *Adventure* #467-478 or the 1988 four-issue *Plastic Man* miniseries, for example) have relied upon the classic Plas/Woozy combo ever since.

Issue #7, Plastic Man faces off against a DC Silver Age gorilla.

The cover of Plastic Man #1 features art by the late, great Gil Kane!



WHERE DOES JUNIOR LIVE?

The “new” Plastic Man (whom we will now refer to as Plas, Jr.) guest appeared in, of all places, *Inferior Five* #2 (June, 1967), further confusing what world he is supposed to inhabit. (The world of the I5 is a bizarre amalgam of DC universe heroes, Marvel universe doppelgangers, and non-canonical heroes such as the WWII era “Freedom Brigade.”) In the issue in question, the I5 face Fantastic Four lookalikes, the Kookie Quartet, led by Mr. Manplastic. The group’s leader is so named because he’s “so like Plastic Man.” (Betcha never realized that “Mr. Fantastic” was really “Plastic Man” spelled sideways—well DC noticed!) Between Marvel’s Mr. Fantastic and M.F. Enterprises’ Elastic Man (not to mention DC’s own Elastic Lad and Elongated Man), Plas had had enough.

He appeared on the penultimate page and exclaimed, “I’m sick and tired of all you phoney (sic) copying the one and only sultan of stretching... me!” (Never mind that he himself was just a pale copy of his father—that revelation was still six months away.) He then tied Mr. Manplastic up in knots (literally) and bounced out of there. If anything, this appearance makes it that much easier to de-canonize the 1960s series.

Plastic Man did not interact with the rest of the DC universe much in the 1960s. He appeared in *Brave & Bold* #76 (February, 1968), which would seem to place him on Earth-One, but a lot of strange guest stars appeared in *B&B*, creating continuity headaches. The Spectre and Wildcat, for example, were denizens of Earth-Two, who presumably did not have Earth-One counterparts; Sgt. Rock was supposed to be in World War II; Hawk and Dove were depicted as having grown to adulthood while Robin still hadn’t. So guest-starring in *Brave & Bold* is a less than conclusive proof of anything.

CONTINUITY GIVES ME A HEADACHE

So now we have three Plastic Men (so far). Robby Reed, pretender to the throne (although he is as much “Plastic Man” as he is Giant Boy or Radar-Sonar Man); Plas, Jr., star of the sixties series who is clearly outside of mainstream continuity; and seeming “original” Plas, back to basics in the 1970s series. But is he, in fact, the “original?” Let’s throw in one more Plastic Man, just to stir the pot a bit. But this one is deceased.

JLA #107 established the Quality characters as living on Earth-X, which had been conquered by Nazis. In a shot of heroes killed in the struggle we see Plastic Man and the Blackhawks. It would appear from this that the original Quality



Plastic Man was killed, but was survived by his Earth-One doppelganger.

Yes, the 1970s Plas is the Earth-One counterpart of his Golden Age namesake. And he's been around for quite a while it would seem. *JLA* #144 includes an Earth-One Plastic Man in a story that is supposed to take place in 1959, before any version was introduced into the DC Universe! But remember *House of Mystery* #160 from 1966? Robby said Plastic Man was a crime-fighter from years earlier—and Robby was later established to live on Earth-One! And you thought I just left that loose end dangling.

Of course, in post-Crisis (pre-Hypertime) DC continuity, there was just the one Earth. The original Plastic Man was established to be active in WWII even after the Crisis, yet later comics (including the current *JLA* series) place him in more modern times. Call it a “continuity blip.” Like Green Arrow

Even though *House Of Mystery* #160 was published in the mid-1960s, the Plastic Man sequence it contains (page 15 shown above) is wonderfully reminiscent of Quality's *Police Comics* of the 1940s.

World's Weirdest Hero!

who was plucked from the Seven Soldiers of Victory, we have to assume that current DC version of history no longer includes a WWII Plastic Man.

FEELING WOOLY YET?

Now that we've sorted out our various Plastic Men, we've one question left to address: Who exactly is Wooly Winks? Is he a petty thief, protected by Mother Nature (*Police Comics* #13)? A lunatic released from an asylum when funds ran out (*Plastic Man* miniseries #1, November, 1988)? Or is he a master spy rendered defective by inhaling Plas' acid-soaked blood (*Plastic Man Special* #1, August, 1999)?

Ultimately it really doesn't matter. None of this does. Because more so than just about any other character, Plastic Man is about having fun. We can try to impose our ideas of order on him, but Plastic Man is about chaos. Not chaos as in anarchy, but chaos as in being unbridled, unbound and unpredictable. So when contradictory continuities get you down, remember what Plas himself says in *Secret Origins* (third series) #30 (September, 1988), "Here's the way it happened... or at least the way I remember it. Take your pick..." If it doesn't bother him, why should it bother us?

This two-panel sequence in which Robby Reed becomes Plastic Man in *HOM* #160 is part of the fifth installment of Dial H for Hero... and is described by the OPG as the "first Silver Age appearance" of the stretchable hero.



ABOVE: *Plastic Man* #13... Gel O'Brien vs. Robby Reed. BELOW: *Plastic Man* #11 is really the first issue of Volume IV.



Of Glue Ripples & Spine Puckers!

The class-specific grading standards of squarebound comic books

BY BILL HOWARD

It seems an odd thing to say that the generally accepted Overstreet grading standards have less relevance to squarebound comic books than to their more commonly collected saddle-stitched brethren, but it's true.

Having collected high-grade squarebound (or perfect bound) comic books for more than 30 years, I am particularly sensitive to the grading peculiarities of squarebounds. I've developed my own set of general guidelines I think are specific, if not exclusive, to squarebound comics books. These guidelines seem to resonate with other squarebound collectors on a tacit level; we don't talk about them much, but we all take them into account before purchase.

These guidelines take the form of what I call "class-specific" defects. That is, they are not generally found in saddle-stitched comic books, and represent a key point of comparison between low and high grade squarebounds. That's not to say that other defects, found in all comic books regardless of size or binding method, are not also taken into consideration. They are. It's just that one cannot grade squarebounds without understanding these class-specific defects better.

Seven Specific Defects

To start, I am identifying seven primary squarebound defects. All seven of these defects are critical to my determination of grade and, ultimately, value. You may have others. I'm interested in hearing about them.

I. Pinched spine

The unique storage environment of the Edgar Church (Mile High) collection, would be anathema to squarebound preservation. Piles of comic books stacked on top of one another had the effect

of compressing the spines, keeping them tight, and also forcing the air out from between the pages and the books themselves. This compression (and other factors like temperature, humidity, absence of light, careful handling, etc.) left most of the collection in a pristine condition, looking as new as the day they were printed.

Compression, as it relates to saddle-stitched books can, under the right conditions, be a very good thing. Compression, at it relates to squarebound comics books, is always a very bad thing, creating the worst and most serious of the squarebound defects, a pinched spine. It's the same effect you get when squeezing a marshmallow. This pinching effect is unbelievably common in squarebounds. I estimate that more than 98% of all squarebounds suffer from some degree of compressed or pinched spine.

Why is this such a big deal for squarebounds? Simple. Squarebounds, first and foremost, need to be square! Every corner of the spine has to be at a 90 degree angle from it's opposite corner. When I grade a prospective squarebound for my collection, I deduct a minimum of a full grade for a compressed spine, depending on its severity. Are only the corners pinched? Or, does the compression extend further up along the spine? For my own purposes, I will grade a pinched spine no higher than Very Fine.

II. Spine split

Split spines are a major defect in all comic books, but they take on a whole new meaning in squarebounds. First, almost all squarebound spines have printing on them. A spine split can, therefore, render the printing on the spine illegible.

Second, a spine split effectively "unsquares" the squarebound. Third, a severe spine split can reveal the signatures beneath—signatures

being the grouping of pages in quantities of 8, 16, or 32 pages that make up squarebound comic books. I've seen relatively small spine splits on squarebounds completely ruin the esthetic quality of the book. I usually penalize a book at least a half grade for a spine split, again depending on severity.

III. Cover/left margin crease

Cover creasing is nothing new to comic book collectors. We're all familiar with the kind of deep subscription crease that runs through a comic's center. It's often severe enough to downgrade an otherwise Near Mint book to a lowly Very Good grade. And corner creases of varying sizes are one of the most common, if not THE most common, cover defects on saddle-stitched books.

Squarebounds sport the usual assortment of cover creases too, but they've got one of their very own, one not found on saddle-stitched books. That's the crease that occurs when the cover is folded open. Because the glue which attaches the cover to the interior pages is hard and stiff, the very act of opening the cover can result in a vertical crease that traverses the entire height of the comic, approximately 1/8" from the spine on the comic's left side. Take any perfect bound magazine you find in your home and fold open the cover so it stays open on its own. You'll see what I mean. Unwitting readers, before the days when these darn things were worth anything, often bent back the cover of squarebounds for easier reading. If the crease is deep and has worn through the cover, I usually downgrade the book a full grade. This defect is especially prominent on squarebounds with unusually heavy cover stock, like Dell Giants. With Dell Giants, the crease is more like a break and can effect the physical integrity of the cover over time.

IV. Spine copy misalignment

Like saddle-stitched comic books, squarebounds often suffer from off-center covers and copy. I know many collectors who aren't especially troubled by this defect, but most squarebound collectors feel differently. Truth be told, no saddle-stitched book ever had printing on its spine. Esthetically speaking, this is a pretty odious defect for a squarebound. It actually results in moving copy intended for the spine onto the cover. For me, this can ruin the cover and "unsquares" the book. (By now, I think you can tell that almost nothing is more important in a squarebound than its "squaredness!")

Spine copy misalignment is often accompanied by a pinched spine, further compromising its eye appeal for the high-grade collector. I can't tell you how many pinched and misaligned-spine books I've been offered at Near Mint prices. At best, this double-whammy of squarebound defects automatically decreases the ultimate grade I assign to a Fine plus or worse.

V. Glue ripple

Glue ripples occur during the bindery process of gluing the cover to the inside pages and are only found on squarebounds, since saddle-stitched books don't use glue in their production. As the glue dries, it contracts, causing the cover stock and often the spine itself to ripple. Couple this with the drying and contracting of the paper itself, and you get the ripple effect. If I'm not mistaken, a heated-glue binding technique was employed on all squarebound comic books through the 1960s and, even, into the early 1970s. Today, plastic-based glues, more like rubber cement, are used. These new materials, supposedly, don't have the same propensity towards shrinkage.

While a glue ripple can clearly disturb the look and feel of the cover, I don't find it a particularly troublesome defect compared to the others I have described so far. You may feel differently. The fact that the glue ripple was introduced during the creation of the book itself, differentiates it from other defects whose origins are outside the creative process, like poor handling, improper storage, and the like. (I think the squarebound glue ripple is very much akin to the bindery creases found on many saddle stitched comic books in this regard.) While I will typically downgrade a book with glue ripples only a half grade or so, the defect is common enough that it serves to highlight the true scarcity of high-grade squarebounds.

VI. Spine pucker

This is my favorite defect, not because I'm overly fond of it, but because I've never heard anyone describe it before and hope my definition will find a place in the grading lexicon. Spine puckers are small spine indentations of any size found anywhere along the spine. They look just like they sound, and are caused when gaps between the signatures become permanent. Spine puckers disrupts the smooth, flat continuity of the spine. Instead of a two-dimensional flat spine, a spine pucker gives the impression of a street with potholes. I've also found that, with time, puckers can become more pronounced, sort of like sinkholes. Beware of puckers!

VII. Staple indentation

Staple-related defects are a problem for all comic books. Rusty and missing staples are only a couple of the many defects associated with staples. For some reason some squarebounds were both stapled and glued during the bindery process. My guess is that stapling the interior pages together was a cheap and simple way of binding the book, while adding structural stability at the same time. Even some squarebound magazines and books were bound with staples.

Anyway, the result is often a staple that pokes through either the first or last page on the first or last signature. When closed these staples can leave an indentation on the front or back cover. Paper drying can also cause this indentation even in cases where nothing was placed or stored on the cover itself. I've seen many instances where the staples actually tear through the cover. Besides an actual tear or indentation, the staple indent is usually accompanied by discoloration of the paper around it.

A common preventative measure is to take a small piece of acid free paper and place it over the staples themselves while closing the book. This way the staples dig into the acid free paper instead of the cover. All in all a clever solution to a nagging problem. I've seen this trick done on saddle-stitched books with misaligned staples too. Again,

depending on the severity of the indentation, I rate a staple indentation a half a grade or so.

Page Quality (Page Whiteness)

No discussion of comic book grading (squarebound or otherwise) would be complete without a word or two about paper quality. Page quality seems to have become the hobby's dirty little secret. Most knowledgeable collectors will tell you that page quality is at least as important as cover quality. The White Mountain pedigree is probably the best example of the preeminence of page quality. In most cases, the White Mountain's are of only average structural quality. But their pages are spectacularly white and supple.

White pages and high gloss covers equals high prices, and the White Mountain's have done more than hold their own over the years, commanding multiples of Guide prices. Now, with the advent of the Internet and "archival quality" holders, page quality is taking a back seat to cover quality once again. This is a shame really, as a comic book needs to be graded in its entirety, not merely on the eye appeal of its cover.

Page quality means the same to high-grade squarebound collectors as it does to other comic book collectors. Recently I've noticed a phenomena that might be isolated to a few books or might be part of something else... it's the tendency of pages in the same book to age differently. I find that in some cases, deep in the heart of large squarebounds, the page quality is better than anywhere else in the book. Could this be due to the compression phenomena that resulted in such great preservation success on the

Edgar Church copies, or something else?

Remember, squarebounds contain multiple signatures of varying page counts. These signatures may have been printed at different times, even perhaps using different paper inventory. If so, it could explain differential aging within the same comic book. Still, it's an odd defect and still not common in my experience. If nothing else it shows the necessity of examining the whole squarebound when deriving a grade.

Storing Squarebounds

I have literally thousands of squarebounds in my collection. Some of them, like *Gift Comics*, are big—well over 300 pages. Others are small... some 64 pages. And, their trim sizes vary too. This



adds up to something of a storage headache. Normal storage techniques don't work very well. Try jamming a 300-page comic book into a Mylar, even if it is "magazine" size. Try the same thing with a 100-pager in a standard Silver or Gold Mylar. You'll wind up with a dented spine, or worse a pinched spine, because the Mylar has very little give at the bottom heat seal.

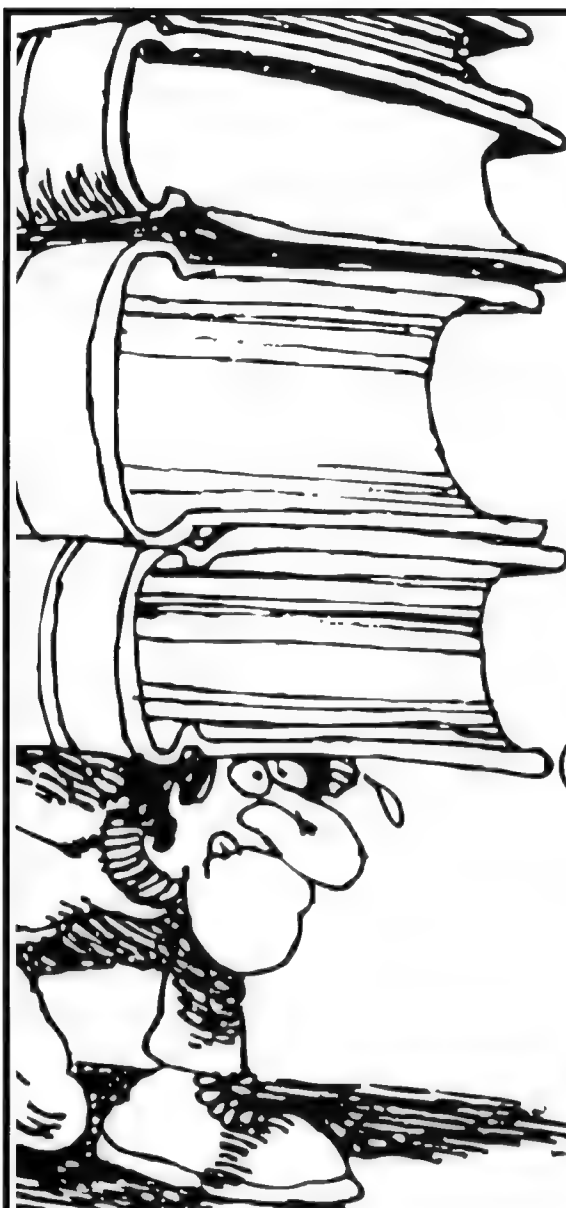
I'm wary of pinching the bottom of my square-boards when I try to squeeze them into Mylar. I make sure I gently insert the books and leave plenty of room at the bottom. This way, as gravity takes its inevitable hold, the Mylar has some give before the onset of pinching. Just don't bounce those boxes around much.

The second method I use to store my square-boards is to lay them flat. This probably seems counter-intuitive. Everyone knows that stacking comic books is a sure way to encourage spine roll... a nasty defect. But—and here again squareboards differ from their saddle stitched counterparts—the spines on squareboards are structurally rigid and stiff. Must be the extra pages and all that dried glue. While you can find spine roll on squareboards, it's not an especially common defect. For example, all my DC and Dell Giants are stored in Mylite 2s (which I feel is a much better product than the flimsy Mylite 1, which scare the heck out of me). Then I lay them flat with about 15 comic books per box.

Backing boards are a personal taste. Mostly I don't use them when I store flat. I do use them when I store vertically. This method keeps my books tight and square. I suggest experimenting with the method that best suits your personal storage space and budget.

I hope this short discourse on squarebound defects will encourage other giant collectors to weight in with their thoughts. If you know of other defects I've neglected, please drop me a line via *CBM*. Maybe Ye Editor will publish them in Marketplace Mail. 

Besides being one of the foremost square-bound collectors in the country, Bill Howard serves on the American Association of Comic Book Collectors (AACC) Board of Directors and on various grading panels/symposiums at Sotheby's and the San Diego Con. In his life outside the hobby, he is senior vice president of global sales and marketing for CMP Media, Inc., the world's largest technology media company with more than 200 magazines.



Win a *free* copy
of Fantagraphics
and Gemstone's
newest hit...

The Tales Of Terror
EC Companion.

(cvr price \$39.95!)

Just complete
this coupon
and mail it in!

Enter CBM's Christmas 2000 "No Contest" Free Prize Drawing!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Favorite Era: Gold ☐ Atom ☐ Silver ☐ Bronze ☐ other ☐

Favorite Publisher: Marvel ☐ Atlas ☐ Timely ☐ DC ☐ Disney ☐

Dell/Gold Key ☐ Quality ☐ Fiction House ☐ EC ☐ other ☐

Favorite Genre: Romance ☐ Horror ☐ Superhero ☐ Sci-Fi ☐

Funny Animal ☐ TV/Movie ☐ Western ☐ War ☐ Teen ☐ other ☐

Age: under 21 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ over 50 ☐

Send to: CBM's Christmas 2000 Free Prize Drawing, P.O. Box 180700, Coronado, CA 92178. All contest entries must be received no later than December 25, 2000. Gemstone Publishing and Diamond Comic Distrib. employees and their families are ineligible. The winner will be determined by random drawing.

AS THE 1960s BEGAN, Dell Comics were the number-one sellers on the nation's newsstands, beating out rivals DC, Archie, Harvey, and the few other remaining companies that had survived the purge of the 1950s and the creation of the Comics Code. Western Publishing, releasing its books under the Dell imprint, held a virtual monopoly on licensed-character comics, many of which the company had been publishing for a couple of decades. Regular issue size had shrunk from 52 to 32 pages, but the price per issue remained at 10¢, with giant specials selling for a quarter apiece.

In 1961, however, for reasons best known to themselves, the powers-that-be at Western decided to experiment with comics in different formats, perhaps in preparation for the creation of their new Gold Key imprint the following year. (They also

decided to increase the price of their regular comics to 15¢ just as the rest of the industry upped its price to 12¢, a move which cost them dearly in sales... but that's another story.)

At that point, Dell had been publishing comics based on the Hanna-Barbera TV cartoon characters for almost three years, beginning with *Ruff and Reddy* in 1958, and the license was proving quite lucrative, having expanded to include titles featuring Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear, Pixie and Dixie, and Quick Draw McGraw, with more soon to come. Thus the Hanna-Barbera characters were a natural selection to spearhead the experiment into new formats.

In the spring of '61, Dell released *Huck and Yogi Jamboree*, a blue cardboard-covered book about the size and dimensions of one of the crossword puzzle books they also published, con-



taining 116 pages of black-and-white stories and artwork. The two stars, Huckleberry Hound and Yogi Bear, got equal billing, and each was featured in several stories spiced with a slightly more sophisticated humor than was usually found in a "normal" Dell comic aimed at youngsters, as well as a few stories adapted directly from the cartoons.

In the Huck stories, he worked his way rapidly through the ranks of law-enforcement, battled a plundering pirate, became a character in a retelling of Little Red Riding Hood, tried to find something to occupy his time over a long weekend, offered advice to the lovelorn and the sports car driver, and starred in satires of personnel management, TV westerns, and credit cards. For Yogi's part, he became a stuntbear in a Hollywood movie, paid his first visit to the big city, enrolled in a method acting class, attempted to go on a diet, babysat a bratty tourist child, offered tips on tipping, etiquette, and dealing with free-way traffic, and even revealed his heretofore secret origin.

Huck and Yogi Jamboree also previewed several strange innovations which would pop up again in the early Gold Key comics: borderless panels, square or non-existent word balloons, simple straight lines in place of balloon pointers, etc. Apparently the editor was attempting to make the comics look more like the coloring and activity books which Western also published.

Because of its unique size and contents, merchants didn't know quite what to do with the book. I happened to be in Tower Drugs, one of the local Winnipeg pharmacies that sold comic books, in April of '61, when I spied one lone copy hiding among the latest magazines. I was not quite 10 years old and a huge fan of all the Hanna-Barbera characters at the time, so of course I had to have it! But the price was an entire dollar, and for a 10-year-old in 1961, a dollar was a lot of money. (My allowance at the time was a quarter per week.) I quickly biked the six blocks home and begged my folks to give me an advance on the birthday money I knew I'd be collecting in a couple of weeks. As far as I can remember, this was the first and only time I ever asked for such an advance, and I must have done a convincing job, because they coughed up the needed buck. I promptly raced back to the store and grabbed my prize before some other kid could notice it.

After I read and re-read it repeatedly, *Huck and Yogi Jamboree*, because of its odd size, came to reside in my bottom dresser drawer with my coloring books, rather than in a pile with my other comics. Unfortunately, at some point during my teens, it disappeared from its assigned place, and I never saw it again. Sometime around 1981, after having corresponded with him for some time and learned of a mutual interest in things Hanna-Barbera, I told fellow collector Mike Tiefenbacher about the Jamboree book, which he had never seen. At the very next Chicago Comic Con, Mike spied a copy and bought it, and his is still the only copy I've ever seen, other than my own, although I've been searching for a replacement for over twenty years.

Whenever I can't make the trip to Chicago Con, I usually prevail upon Mike to shop for a copy on my behalf. In 1999,

although he again failed to find one, he did talk with a dealer who had had a copy pass through his hands during the '70s and who happened to mention that he had also seen a similar book, with a red cover, featuring the Flintstones. Oh, great! Suddenly I had two Hanna-Barbera Holy Grails for which to search instead of one.

Shortly thereafter, I was talking to comics and TV writer Mark Evanier (who is also a big Hanna-Barbera fan and an occasional employee), and happened to mention my fruitless quest. It turned out that Mark owned copies of both books (and wouldn't part with them, it goes without saying), and was able to tell me that the second book came out about six months after *Jamboree* (making it one of the very earliest comics to feature the Flintstones) and was titled *Flintstones On the Rocks*.

While *Huck and Yogi Jamboree* has been listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* for many years, *Flintstones On the Rocks* has never been listed—not even in the 30th edition, after I personally alerted the publishers to its existence. Having still never seen a copy, I can only presume that it too contains a selection of stories featuring sharp social satire and perhaps some episodes adapted from the first season of the TV series... and, of course, the same strange word balloons and panel borders.

GOLDEN PICTURE STORY BOOKS

The funny balloons and borders also turned up in 1961's other format experiment, the giant tabloid-sized *Golden Picture Story Book* series, which was comprised of two Hanna-Barbera issues—one *Huckleberry Hound* and one *Yogi Bear*, each featuring not only the titular star but the entire cast of his TV series, and both guest-starring the cast of the Quick Draw McGraw show—and two Walt Disney issues—an adaptation of the live-action movie *Babes in Toyland*, and an anthology called Disney's *Wonderful World of Ducks*. Each book featured 48 interior pages in full color.

Tower Drugs carried only two of these, the *Huck* and the *Ducks*, each with a 59¢ sticker glued over the actual 50¢ cover price, for some reason. Having only enough money for one of them on the day I spotted them, I naturally grabbed the *Huck* book. I would not learn of the existence of the *Yogi* book or acquire a copy of it or the Disney books until decades later when I began attending conventions and buying comics extensively through the mail. At the time, I thought these special for-



HANNA-BARBERA'S ODD FORMAT COMICS

**Golden Picture
Story Books ST1
Hanna and
Barbera's
Huckleberry
Hound
Chuckleberry Time
and ST2 Hanna
and Barbera's Yogi
Bear Yummy
Tummy Stories**

mat books were really cool, but they were hell to store in a kid's bedroom. Thanks to its odd size, the *Huck Story Book* also resided for years in my bottom dresser drawer, along with my copy of *Jamboree* and my many Hanna-Barbera coloring books. Unlike *Jamboree*, however, it didn't disappear, and I still have my original copy, the only one I've ever seen.

For the record, the four books in the series, published by Racine Press, another Western imprint, were: #ST1—Huckleberry Hound Chuckleberry Time; #ST2—Yogi Bear Yummy Tummy Stories; #ST3—Babes in Toyland (with an Annette Funicello photo cover); and #ST4—Wonderful World

of Ducks (featuring Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge, Grandma Duck, Gyro Gearloose, Ludwig von Drake, and Huey, Dewey, and Louie stories).

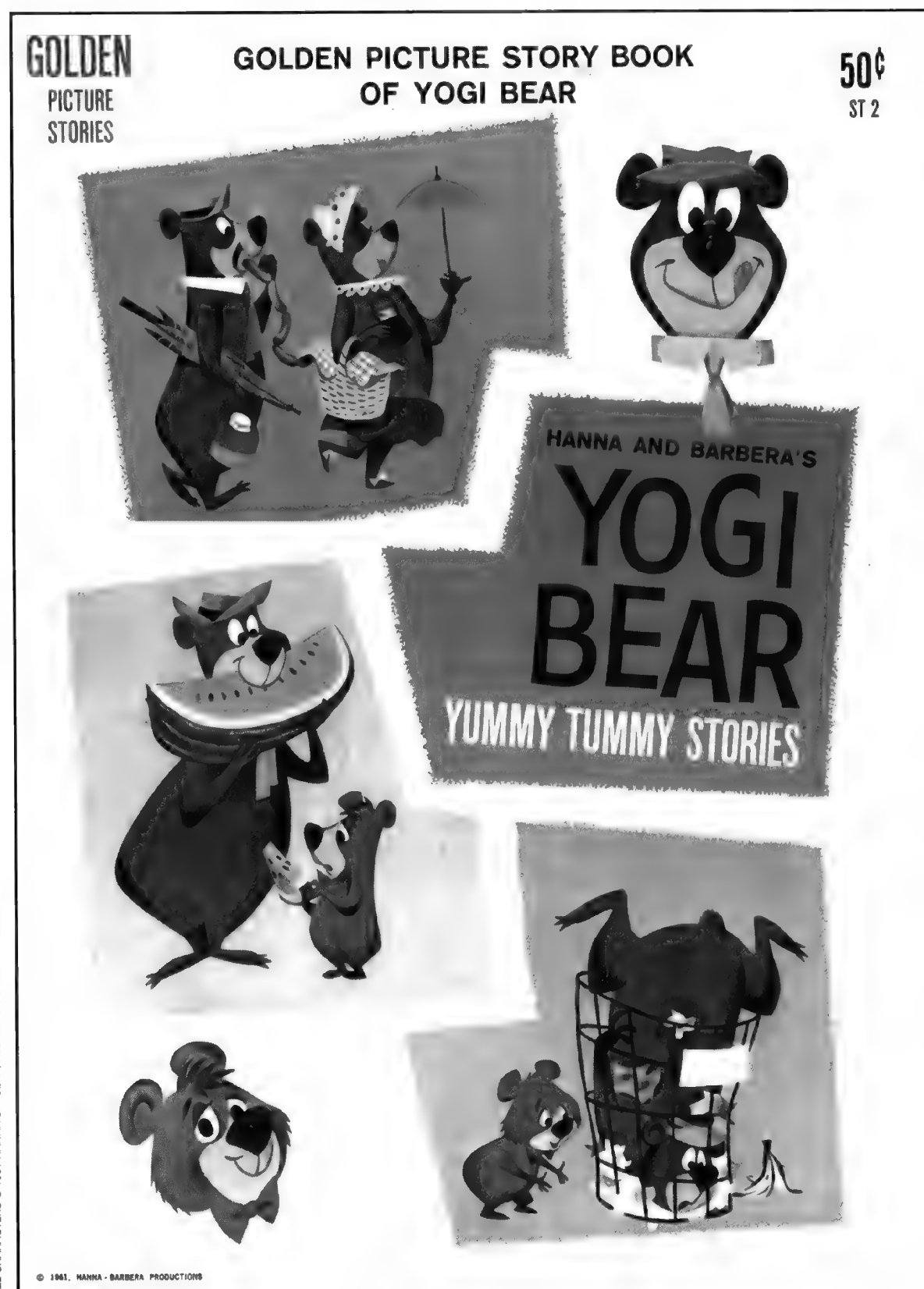
Like *Jamboree* and *On the Rocks*, the *Golden Picture Story Books* were a nightmare for newsstand owners and quickly disappeared from those few establishments that reluctantly chose to stock them, never to be seen again. Western, however, was not quite finished with trying out new comics formats.

In 1962, Whitman Publishing, yet another Western colophon, produced a series of eight small hardcover books, roughly the size of a Big Little Book, each 136 pages with

black-and-white interiors. The first six were Hanna-Barbera titles, while the latter two featured Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck, respectively. Unlike the other books mentioned here, I never saw these on sale at all when they first came out. They were probably available in the children's books sections of department stores, rather than at newsstands and pharmacies like the standard comics. Again, the odd size probably made them unpopular, and the experiment went unrepeated and for the most part, unnoticed.

I first became aware of the series when it was listed in the *Price Guide*, and Mike Tiefenbacher informed me that the Hanna-Barbera issues reprinted stories originally produced by American artists and writers for the British weekly Hanna-Barbera tabloid titles. According to *Overstreet*, the Bugs Bunny issue reprinted stories from issues #47, 51, and 53-55 of the Dell comic, while the Donald Duck issue reprinted most of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #209-213, including five Duck stories by Carl Barks, a Mickey Mouse serial by Paul Murry, and another Mickey serial missing its first chapter. I had only just added the Hanna-Barbera issues of the series to my want list when, to my happy surprise, my dealer friend Doug Sulipa came up with copies (although not in perfect condition) of all six books!

All the stories in these books are extremely short. The first four books, featuring Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Hound, Mr. Jinks and Pixie and Dixie, and the Flintstones, respectively, each contain 34 4-page stories, while the latter two, one co-starring Augie Doggie and Loopy de Loop, and one co-starring Quick Draw McGraw and Snooper and Blabber, each contain 68 2-page stories, or 34 stories of each of the two featured strips. The plots of many of these stories are identical to those appearing



in various Hanna-Barbera issues of the American giveaway title, *March of Comics*, probably representing some early recycling on the part of the writers.

AN HISTORICAL NOTE: Because the character Loopy de Loop was created for theatrical cartoons in 1959 and was not part of the Hanna-Barbera TV pantheon, he did not appear in American comic books until the first of the Gold Key titles, *Hanna-Barbera Bandwagon* #1, was released in July 1962. The *Price Guide* gives September 1962 as the date of the Whitman comic book series, which means that the books could have been released as early as June of that year. If so, *WCB* #5 would mark Loopy's first appearance in U.S. comics, though obviously not in Britain.

FURTHER ODDITIES:

1) Besides being numbered #1-8, the books in the series are also designated as 2400-A through 2400-H.

2) *WCB* #3 is the only comic ever to give Mr. Jinks top billing over Pixie and Dixie.

3) *WCB* #6 is cover-titled "Snooper and Blabber, Fearless Detectives/Quick Draw McGraw of the Wild West," thus giving the private eye duo top billing, even though they were supporting players on Quick Draw's show and the Quick Draw half of the book precedes the Snooper and Blabber half.

4) Because they were first published in tabloids, the original strips were cut up and the panels repasted to fit on the smaller pages of these books, resulting in errors with panels printed out of sequence in issues #1 and 3-5.

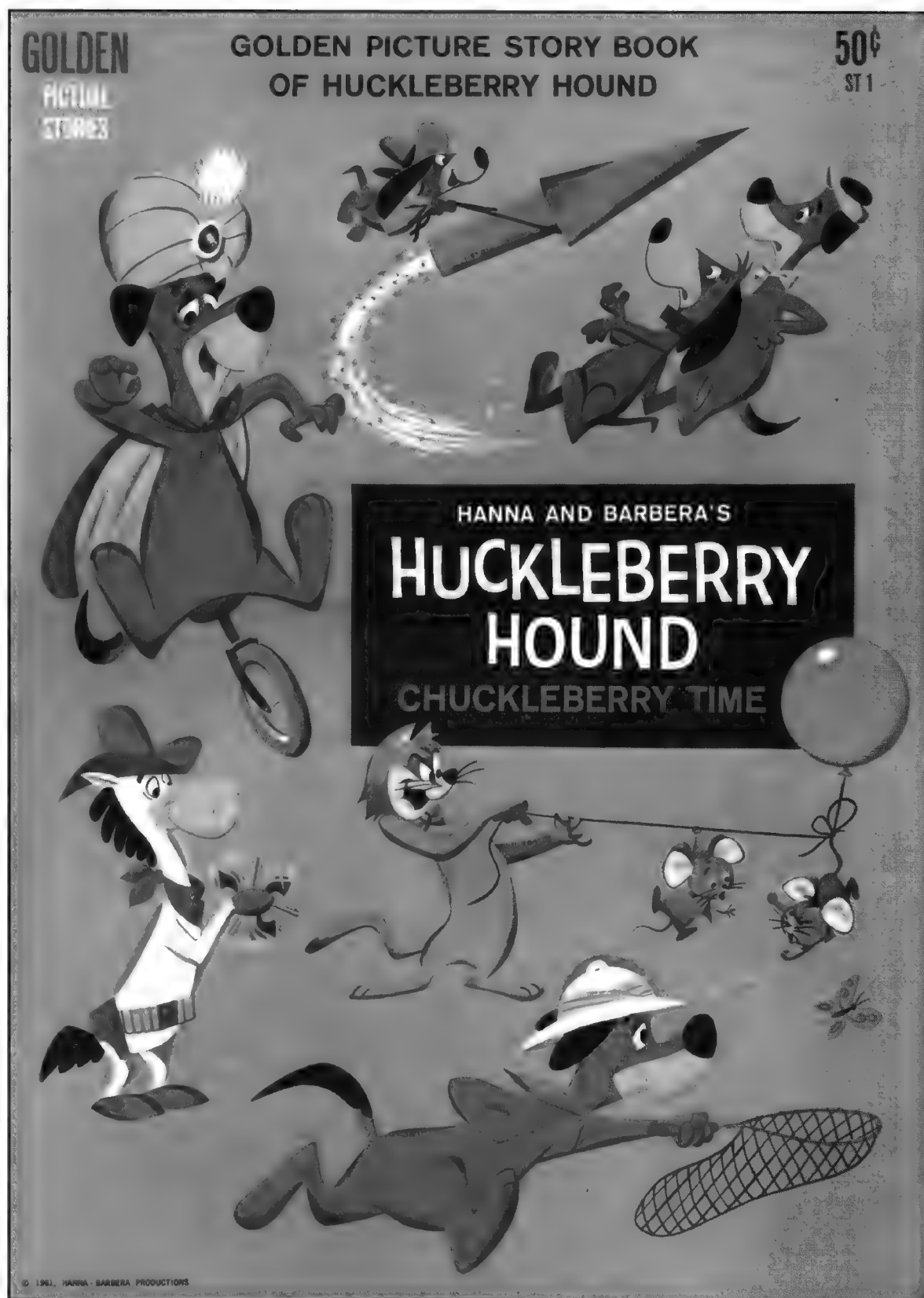
5) Although each book is devoted to a single strip, the following characters appear as guest-stars: Yogi Bear, Boo Boo, Pixie, Dixie, Mr. Jinks, Quick Draw McGraw, Augie Doggie, Doggie Daddy, and Hokey Wolf in #2; Yakky Doodle, Dum Dum, and Ranger Smith in #5; and Chopper in #3, 5-6.

In July 1962, virtually all of the Dell titles based on licensed characters from other media, including the entire Hanna-Barbera troupe, suddenly became Gold Key titles, as Western began publishing their own comics under a new name. During their first year, experimentation abounded, including the aforementioned borderless panels, square word balloons, and minimalist balloon pointers, not to mention the cancellations of many long-running titles, the reduction in frequency of

other old favorites, the abandonment of the *Four Color* try-out title in favor of one-shots and short-run series, and the transformation, albeit temporary, of much of the line into 25¢ giants. While historically curious, however, apparently none of these changes proved successful, and by the following summer, all such experiments had ceased, and Gold Key Comics, now priced at 12¢ each, had returned to the norm of the rest of the industry.

For Hanna-Barbera collectors, however, Western's earlier attempts to do comics in other than the traditional format had resulted in some of our hobby's most interesting, entertaining, and difficult-to-find oddities. 

Many collectors of large format comic books have discovered that the Golden Picture Story Books are harder to find than the notoriously scarce *New Fun* #1, *Jumbo* #1, and *Master* #1!



Disinter-what?

The hue and cry of many full time dealers these days is "I just can't find any stock to replace the books that I've sold!" OK, class, remember this word? I've mentioned it before. It has seven syllables and is spelled like this: "d-i-s-i-n-t-e-r-m-e-d-i-a-t-i-o-n." Simply put, disintermediation is the act of shutting out middlemen, who are traditionally involved in the process of selling something. The Internet, of course, is the prime agent in making disintermediation happen.

Every collector is now a gypsy dealer traveling the worldwide ethernet hawking their goods. I don't want to hear you collectors say "I'm NOT... gasp! choke! gag!... a DEALER!" If you've ever sold a book, you're a dealer. We all are. No denying that fact. However, now that we have access to uncountable customers, who needs to sell short to a full time dealer, when everyone and anyone can now have a huge audience without any pesky catalogues to print/mail and no advertising costs either? Of course nine out of ten "New Dealers" couldn't grade their way out of a comic box. I especially like the pitch "I found these at an estate sale" or "I don't know anything about comics but..." or one of my favorite descriptions, "These are Gem Mint" Hmmm, yet another new grade!

On top of it all, (1) I'd estimate that less than one-half of all listings sell; (2) supply and demand raises it's ugly head to dominate most transactions; and (3) bottom feeders heavily populate Internet comic book auctions.

Will goods be cheaper once middlemen are taken out of the distribution system? Probably not, if the distribution system we come to rely on involves Federal Express, UPS, and the U.S. Postal Service. Sure, books at Amazon.com are cheaper than at the corner bookshop, but don't forget the dastardly duo of our age: shipping and handling.

I have observed that many long time comic dealers are now forced to put a smile on their faces at conventions and treat their potential customers like they are special. They've come around to the realization that without those folk on the other side of the table, they're out of business. Buyers have a wider choice these days. Certainly the higher priced books will remain with the big money sellers, but, how many buyers are here for that product? If the full time larger dealers fail to get "reintermediated" (what you do to recover from getting disintermediated), they'll have to fold up their tents and find another trade!

Item - The out-of-control (and unexplainable) stratospheric rise in some slabbed high grade books continues. But, what's really going on here? How is it that someone buys a book at public auction, pays a 15% commission, and then re-advertises the same book a couple of months later at a significantly higher price? Since I am prohibited from specifically naming the WCN (weekly comic newspaper), take a look at their multiple page color ads with the newly "appreciated" comics for sale. Eventually the promoter will figure out that many a reader of the WCN do not come remotely close to fitting the financial demographics that he is attempting to target. The people who can afford his asking prices read Forbes, Coin World, and the New York Times... not the WCN. Perhaps these books should be advertised where the money resides.

Here's an example of the slabbed books that I reference: Crypt of Terror #17 NM (CGC 9.6, Gaines File) from \$7,800 to \$11,500; Golden Age Green Lantern #1 FN (CGC 6.0) \$8,400 to \$10,500; Funnies on Parade FN/VF (CGC 7.0) \$7,800 to \$12,500; Hulk #1 NM (CGC 9.2) 18,400 to \$26,500; Adventure #43 NM+ (CGC 9.6, Mile High) \$15,525 to \$22,500; *(Continued on pg 60)*

MARKET REPORTS



STEVE WYATT • SUPERCON

1539 MAYFLOWER COURT
SACRAMENTO, CA 95864
916•485•1887

supercon@super-con.com

As far as action goes this past month, sales have been simply amazing. The West Coast shows have all been very strong. My best sales have been in 1970's Marvels and DC's. (X-Men 94 VF+/NM \$550, GS X-Men #1(not slabbed) NM- \$650). I have been selling books like Adv. of the Planets of the Apes (Comics and Magazines), Defenders, Champions, Invaders, Logans Run... most short series '70's books. Jack Kirby's run of Captain America (#193-214, 216) have also been selling vigorously. I had about 8-10 copies of each two months ago, and now I have none. These are probably Jack's most under-rated and under-valued work for Marvel. X-Men have also been selling like hotcakes. I have gone through 2-3 sets of all the copies I have had between #94 and #143. (Including a complete set of 94-300 for one client). Even low grade copies are selling, and I assume this is because of the movie.

Silver Age has been slowing down just a little, except very high grade copies. An X-Men #1 in VF+ for \$5,500, #6 VF for \$285 and a #10 in VF for \$300 all to the same guy. I have been having other dealers buying NM Silver Age from me at full guide so they can have them slabbed, and re-sale them for over guide. I have a problem with this. My NM and their NM is the same 9.3. I suggest that dealers don't raise the price to customers just for a plastic wrapping case. Does the word "Integrity" ring a bell with anyone? Ultimately, I don't think this will be a good practice for our business/ hobby.

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Adventure

#227 FN	\$59	79%
#260 GD	\$24.5	40%
#264 VG	\$23.5	90%
#267 VF+	\$810	81%
#267 FN	\$71	26%
#267 FN	\$62	23%
#267 VG	\$36	24%
#276 FN	\$34	87%
#282 FN	\$42	75%
#300 FN	\$50	52%
#300 VG	\$36	56%
#315 GD	\$13.5	2.25X
#333 VF+	\$28	1.24X
#366 NM	\$28	1.87X

All American Western

#125 VG	\$40	1.05X
---------	------	-------

Amazing Spider-Man

#2 NM	\$3,150	1.05X
#7 VG	\$102	77%
#11 GD	\$36	88%
#11 VF-	\$200	66%
#13 FN+	\$158	96%
#16 FN	\$77	73%
#17 NM	\$790	1.35X
#32 NM	\$325	2.03X
#33 NM	\$256	1.60X
#35 NM	\$295	1.84X
#64 VF	\$32.75	Guide
#65 VF+	\$25	78%
#95 VF+	\$17	65%

Aquaman

#1 VF	\$235	58%
-------	-------	-----

Archie

#29 GD	\$50	1.25X
--------	------	-------

Atom

#2 VF	\$105	54%
#4 FN	\$25	56%

Atomic War

#1 FN	\$200	75%
-------	-------	-----

Avengers

#1 FN	\$500	97%
-------	-------	-----

Batman

#92 FN+	\$200	1.07X
---------	-------	-------

#129 VF	\$103	64%
#143 VF	\$65	63%
#145 VF+	\$142	1.29X

Brave & Bold

#42 FN+	\$100	1.19X
#43 VF	\$100	47%
#44 VF	\$83	54%

Black Cat

#1 VG	\$237	1.91X
#2 VG	\$54	77%

Buzzy

#1 FN+	\$56	69%
--------	------	-----

Christmas Parade

#2 FN	\$82	76%
-------	------	-----

Classics Illustrated

#41(1st) FN+	\$60	51%
--------------	------	-----

Daredevil

#5 FN	\$27	47%
-------	------	-----

Dark Shadows

#20 NM	\$36	8%
#21 NM	\$36	1.02X

Detective

#76 FN+	\$440	91%
---------	-------	-----

Fantastic Four

#1 VG	\$760	51%
#2 GD	\$310	1.29X
#48 VF	\$250	47%

Flash

#109 FN+	\$127	1.03X
#113 VF	\$280	1.2X
#114 VF	\$255	1.45X
#115 VF	\$202	1.44X
#116 VF	\$133	95%
#117 VF	\$250	1.37X
#118 VF+	\$143	1.02X
#119 VF+	\$193	1.38X
#120 VF	\$169	1.21X
#123 FN+	\$160	53%
#124 VF+	\$138	1.62X
#137 FN+	\$60	50%
#175 FN+	\$25	56%

Frontier Fighters

#8 VG+	\$100	1.28X
--------	-------	-------

Gorgo

#1 FN	\$150	2.27X
-------	-------	-------

Green Lantern

#2 VG+	\$79	68%
#3 VF	\$162	64%
#4 VF	\$142	71%
#6 VF+	\$255	1.35X
#7 VF	\$144	89%
#8 VF+	\$280	1.95%
#9 VF+	\$160	1.12X
#10 VF+	\$162	1.13

Hawkman

#1 VF+	\$225	7200%
#3 VF	\$33	51%
#5 FN+	\$17	57%

House Of Secrets

#67 NM	\$25	38%
#69 NM	\$25	38%

Hulk

#181 VF-	\$275	90%
----------	-------	-----

I Love Lucy

#14 NM	\$128	1.16X
--------	-------	-------

In Love

#1 VG	\$42	63%
-------	------	-----

JLA

#4 FN	\$102	97%
#5 FN+	\$78	87%
#6 VF	\$138	82%
#7 VF	\$127	75%
#8 VF	\$129	76%
#9 FN+	\$55	51%
#10 VF	\$129	76%
#11 VF	\$107	91%
#12 VF	\$117	Guide
#13 VF	\$121	1.03X
#14 VF	\$96	82%
#18 VF	\$99	98%
#19 VF	\$90	89%
#20 VF	\$101	Guide

Joker

#10 VG	\$95	1.19X
--------	------	-------

Magnus

#1 GD	\$26	1.30X
#1 VF	\$82	59%
#2 VG	\$41	2.27X
#2 FN	\$30	1.11X
#3 VG	\$29	1.61X
#6 VG	\$10.5	50%
#12 VF-	\$9	45%
#14 NM	\$19	59%
#21 NM	\$15	68%
#23 FN	\$11.5	1.74X

Metamorpho

#1 NM	\$50	53%
-------	------	-----

My Greatest Adventure

#83 FN	\$25	56%
--------	------	-----

Mystery In Space

#68 NM	\$87	56%
#69 GD	\$9	58%

Mystery Tales

#21 VG	\$25	47%
--------	------	-----

Sea Devils

#1 GD	\$40	Guide
-------	------	-------

Showcase

#22 VG	\$300	50%
#30 VF	\$255	58%

Silver Surfer

#2 FN	\$37	71%
-------	------	-----

Space Family Robinson

#1 FN	\$70	Guide
#7 VF	\$28	78%
#9 VG	\$10	91%
#15 NM	\$25	63%
#46 VF	\$7.5	1.25X
#46 VF	\$4.5	75%
#53 VF	\$6	1.2X

Spectre

#1 VF	\$81	1.40X
-------	------	-------

Strange Adventures

#127 VG	\$10	71%
#195 VF-	\$20	40%

Sugar & Spike

#7 FN+	\$91	76%
--------	------	-----

Superman

#2 FR	\$456	92%
Ann. #1 VF	\$355	60%

Swamp Thing

#1 NM	\$50	63%
-------	------	-----

TOS

#50 FN+	\$29	76%
#54 VF-	\$36	80%
#59 FN+	\$40	50%

True Crime

#2 VG-	\$400	1.52X
--------	-------	-------

TTA

#36 FN	\$65	46%
#47 FN+	\$26	62%

Turok

#10 VF-	\$90	1.09X
#21 VF	\$26	68%

Uncle Scrooge

#25 NM	\$125	Guide
#44 MT	\$85	Guide
#47 NM	\$85	Guide
#48 NM	\$85	Guide
#98 NM	\$35	Guide
#99 NM	\$35	Guide

Walt Disney's Comics & Stories

#134 FN	\$25	52%
#138 FN	\$36	Guide
#215 FN	\$7	70%

Wonder Woman

#89 FN	\$113	1.77X
--------	-------	-------

X-Men

#1 FN	\$1,525	1.23X
#2 VG+	\$203	71%
#9 FN+	\$56	62%
#18 VF+	\$86	1.05X
#19 NM	\$122	98%
#94 VG	\$90	1.08X
#100 NM	\$114	1.52X

Magazines sales have been going through the roof! 1970's Marvel magazines (Kiss, Marvel Super Special, etc...) and all the '70's Warrens and Warren look-a-likes, have been very strong. Even Spirit, Goblin, Rook and Comix International as well as the bigger titles like Vampirella, Creepy, Eerie, and Famous Monsters have been really moving.

Till next time. And come visit us at the November 19th Supercon!

JAMIE NEWBOLD & GINO SIRAGUSA

SOCALCOMICS

8280 CLAIREMONT DRIVE #124

SAN DIEGO, CA 92111

858•715•8669

Bucking the tide, we continue to sell comics over merchandise. Profits are steady, but quickly blown on back issues sold to us by collectors, or others. The constant supply of

back issues being offered up to us by collectors, disinterested with the hobby, remains a constant. We continue to see more Modern Age back issues entering our store, than leaving. We field as many inquires for gaming merchandise, toys, and trading cards purchases, as we do for comics. We rely on an exclusive male buyer age of mid-'20s and older. We enjoy dealing with an older age group. We don't get caught up in buying fads oriented

MARKET REPORTS

towards the young or "quick-buck" market. We watch our competitors exceed our sales potential on "hot" short-term merchandise. Then they are stuck with a vast amount of merchandise that didn't sell. We find that retailing new comics, with their average price many dollars lower than toys, figures, and high-end trading cards, less risky in the long-term. Whatever new comics we don't sell will eventually sell from the back issue bins to customers that may have missed it at the traditional comic book stores that minimize comics on their shelves. Meanwhile, we don't try to compete with chain toy stores while they don't compete with us for comics sales.

Our closest competitors are succeeding on merchandise sales but missing out on many back issue comic collections that steer away from their stores. We make almost daily purchases from comic book owners that are refused service at other stores. Refusals in the form of disinterest or low-ball money offers. We pay a fair price and make it widely known that we do so. To amplify opportunities, we share out-of-town customers with one of our competitors, San Diego Comics, to keep the customer's interest—and money—returning to San Diego. Networking with Greg Pharis' store, as well as one or two others, keeps the back-issue interplay active in our town. The healthy competition between us keeps us on our toes. We work hard to find back-issues outside our store if there is a lull in activity. That feature in our store's character benefits the customers and they appreciate it.

Now, we think, is a good time to be an exclusive comic book sales-only business. The brick-and-mortar comic book market has downsized and the store closures so evident in the 1990s has slowed to a trickle, locally. The majority of successful, existing comic book stores (in the San Diego-Los Angeles region) are heavy merchandisers. Consequently, they tend to be light on comic back issues. Or at least light on a large supply of desirable, older comics. We feel a comics-only store can succeed. Recent store and convention sales has proven the back-issue sales are on the rise from the mid-'90s "speculator crash" period. We feel that there will be a time where the number of issues sold to our store will equal, or exceed the number leaving. Getting prepared for that inevitability is our daily goal.

Golden Age: Crime Does Not Pay #50 FN \$44; Crime Must Pay The Penalty #4 GD/VG \$19.50; Feature Comics #72 GD/VG \$25.50; Feature Comics #144 GD \$11.50; Flash #36 FN \$125; Heroic #48 NM- \$20; Freckles and his Friends #8 FN/VF \$16.50; Joe Palooka #33 VG/FN \$12.50; Soldier #3 VG/FN \$12.50; Whiz #24 VG \$122, #34 FN \$120; Wonder Woman #22 VG/FN \$200; Wow #69 VG \$24.

Silver Age: Amazing Adult Fantasy #11 GD \$38; Amazing Spider-Man #70 NM \$50, #83 NM \$40; Avengers #32 NM- \$23, #33 FN+ \$10; 80 Page Giant #7 VG \$30; Fantastic Four #7 VG \$104, #8 VG \$104, #9 VG/F \$128, #12 VG/F \$200, #38 F/VF \$40, Annual #1 GD/VG \$60; Strange Tales #116 VG/F \$25; Strange Tales #139 VF \$20; Tales Of Suspense #82 VF \$28; Tales To Astonish #4 GD \$31, #7 VG/FN \$77, #26 VG- \$32, #100 FN \$15, #101 VG \$12; Thor #134 FN+ \$20, #147 VF \$20, #148 VF \$20, #150 VF- \$18, #193 F/VF \$20; World's Finest #113 VG \$22; X-Men #6 G/VG \$45, #9 GD \$29.

TERRY'S COMICS

PO BOX 2232
ORANGE, CA 92859
714•288•2993

terryscomics@webtv.net

I am a national mail order dealer of vintage comics with my primary convention market in Los Angeles, Calif. This has been an incredible year for comic sales in general and specifically the conventions. The San Diego Comic-Con can be summed up by sell, sell, sell. What a terrific show. I was good to see so many fans, customers, and fellow dealers down there. It was my best show to date. On the other hand Chicago Wizard-Con can be summed up by buy, buy, buy. I did a lot of buying out there and had reasonable sales too. I will probably do this convention again.

Golden Age Sales: All Star #1 FR \$450; Big Shot #50 VG \$26; Daredevil Comics #9 GD/VG \$98; Human Torch #2(#1) G+ \$2,600, #7 GD/VG \$259, #3(#2) GD- \$530; Jumbo Comics #66 FN- \$50; Master #37 VG/FN \$120; Mickey Finn #10 VG \$12; Mystic V1#1 FR \$362; Popular #128 FN \$28, #80 GD/VG \$38; Red Raven #1 incomplete \$100; Scribbly #2 GD+ \$65; Spirit #3 GD \$35; Sub-Mariner #40 VG+ \$153, #1 FR \$1,000, #21 FR/GD \$162; Whiz #36 GD/VG \$50, #49 VG+ \$55.

Atomic Age Sales: Astonishing #31 FA/GD \$24; Atom Age Combat #4 VG \$30; Crime Reporter #1 VG \$35; H-Bomb and You nn VF \$50; Meteor Comics #1 GD \$38; Outlaws #1 GD \$25; Space Thrillers #1 FR/GD \$75; Spy Cases #28(#3) VF \$70; Suspense #22 FR/GD \$22; Young Romance V13#1 FN/VF \$18.

Silver Age Sales: ASM #1 VG+ \$1,500, #5 FN/VF \$450, #11 FN/VF \$200; Avengers #4 VG (Faded) \$150, #4 FN+ \$375; Challengers #1 PR \$80; Daredevil #1 FN/VF \$561; Dr. Strange #1 VF/NM \$24; Journey Into Mystery #75 GD+\$25; Not Brand Ech! #1 NM \$40; Return of Konga nn VF/NM \$50; Rip Hunter Time Master #9 VF \$60; Sgt. Fury #10 VG+ \$24; Strange Tales #101 FA- \$30; Worlds Finest #84 GD \$30.

Magazine Sales: Comic Book Marketplace #19 VF \$12; Creepy #10 FN \$10, #87 NM \$7; Eerie #17 FN/VF \$28; RBCC #54 \$15; Squa Tront #2 VF \$50, #8 VF \$30.

GREG WHITE COMICS & COLLECTIBLES

17 WEST MONUMENT AVENUE
KISSIMMEE, FL 34741
407•239•0405
whizzer@kua.com

Welcome to autumn in Central Florida. Sales have been steady if not spectacular. Silver Age Marvel and DC still lead the way. The lower grade books sell well while the more expensive high grade copies have a problem finding a home due to higher cost... most collectors here cannot afford books in the \$500 and up range. As usual, we have had to discount certain titles and groups of comics. As I have stated in the past, the overall price structure still needs to be lower in order to improve across the board sales.

Silver Age (1955-1969): Marvels in the Good to Fine range moved well this month. Amazing Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Journey Into Mystery and Tales Of Suspense sold well. We were also able to purchase a 1960's Marvel collection that included every superhero book from late 1962 to 1969. A mid-grade group that will help to fill out our Marvel selection. DC books sell in spurts. One week Batman will move—the next week it will be another title. Overall DC sales are decent but a bit behind Marvel this month. Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey and other similar brands are slow as usual.

(Continued on page 60)

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Where have all the Timelys gone?

A continually strong market looks as if it is going to continue well into the holiday season. Yet, an interesting dichotomy is developing in our hobby. More and more comic retail stores are going out of business, or being forced to incorporate more toys, cards, prints, etc. All while the back issue market, at least through mail order or on-line continues upward. Scarce collections are less frequently finding their way into the local store, whether they could actually sell the books or not. A more astute store owner is required in this day and age. We've all seen stores that do business in such a way that we're sure they'll make it... and who express how much they value their customers with accurate grading and fair pricing. As the field of traditional brick-and-mortar stores narrows, These customer-conscience dealers will be the ones that survive.

Golden Age: The selection of available Timely books is curiously small for a market that is supposedly quiet. Ask around and you'll soon find that multiples of Guide are the norm for Timely Golden Age. Leading the way is Captain America and Sub-Mariner, but Marvel Mystery is right in there too commanding premiums with every sale.

Golden Age Sales: Batman #1 AppGD \$7,200; Captain America #17 FR \$190; Captain America #43 GD \$250; Fighting Yank #10 VF \$650; Flash #2 VG- \$750; Marvel Mystery #6 FR \$295, #31 VG \$775; Police Comics #7 GD \$120; Spy Master #7 GD \$140; Star #10 GD \$140; Sub Mariner #12 FN/VF \$680.

Atomic Age: Photo-cover Westerns continue to surprise everyone in the hobby because of their warm reception outside of our hobby. Certainly only a

few actually bring Guide levels, but any movement is a good thing. Pre-Code war titles (a long under-valued and under-appreciated genre) is coming on strong! And just trying to find these books in anything above FN. Don't be surprised to pay Triple Guide for the higher grade pre-Code war books! Fox Good Girl continues to amaze hobbyists as their popularity and demand continues to grow. Even the second generation Horror collectors are moving into this market... and they're not at all put off by multiples!

Atomic Age Sales: All Great #1 VF \$200; Ellery Queen #1 VF \$560; Fight #86 VF/NM \$190; Four Color #575 FN \$35; Mister Mystery #12 FR \$150; My Secret Life #22 VG \$95; Rulah #24 VF \$550; Teen Age Romances #16 VG \$110; This Magazine Is Haunted #3 FN \$125.

Silver Age: Back when every headline cried "big money in the Golden Age" Silver Age collectors went quietly to work. That farsighted acquisition has paid off as the phenomena of CGC books continues unabated. Multiples of Guide for NM Marvel and DC Silver doesn't surprise anyone and it is even being applied to material in the VF range. Would a CGC population study scare off collectors and investors? Some Silver investors find themselves drawn towards the older books because they've been burned already on a few issues. Eventually, the component of scarcity has to come into play when investing, and all too often the data is just not there. Discovering which issues are truly scarce is the trick, and that takes time, knowledge, and experience... not just a high score.

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #1 AppVG (CGC 4.0) \$2,200, #40 NM- (CGC 9.2) \$200; Batman #200 VF (CGC

8.5) \$325; Journey into Mystery #115 VF+ (CGC 8.5) \$185; Showcase #4 FR \$2,750, #57 VF \$125; Star Spangled War Stories #151 FN \$165; Strange Adventures #46 VG \$32; Tales to Astonish #59 VF+ (CGC 8.5) \$280; Worlds Finest #173 NM \$90.

Bronze Age: It is definitely a sellers market. Many collectors seem to be completely unaware of the supplies available. The demand for Marvel and DC seem to be generally equal, but the DC Horror and War titles clearly lead the way. Marvel Superhero in high grade often brings well above Guide, but the X-Men rush seems to have slowed. In the past, collectors have drawn an imaginary line at the end of 1974 or so, but no longer! DC One Dollar formats and the Marvel Giant Sized issues are very popular right now, as well as the long under-appreciated Annuals in high grade.

Bronze Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #122 NM (CGC 9.4) \$375; Batman #404 NM (CGC 9.6) \$40; Captain America #143 FN \$9; DC Special #11 FN+ \$28; GI Combat #138 GD \$16; Giant Size Kid Colt GD #1 VF \$18, Giant Size X-Men #1 GD \$95; House of Secrets #92 GD \$80; Iron Fist #14 VF \$98; Marvel Spotlight #3 NM (CGC 9.4) \$100; Monsters on the Prowl #16 NM \$14; Star Spangled War Stories/US #205, VF \$30; Wonder Woman #200 FN \$18.

Can or will a population report issued by The CGC drastically affect the market as we now know it? Certainly. Will we continue to see the multiples paid for the graded books? Certainly. It is just going to shift to a different arena. Like it or not, This new dynamic in our hobby is here to stay, and I predict it's going to change the market more than we can even imagine. Stay tuned for updates!

MARKET REPORTS

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #10 VG \$90, #17 NM \$400; Batman #10 GD \$350, Detective #230 GD \$50, Fantastic Four #12 GD \$125; Strange Tales #101 VG \$150; Tales of Suspense #41 VG \$175.

NAIMAN REPORT

Continued from page 56

Suspense #7 NM (CGC 9.2 Mile High) \$5,463 to \$12,500; Power #4 NM (CGC 9.2 Mile High) \$7,188 to \$10,500!

Maybe there's some type of hypnotic magic that takes place when you gaze upon a slabbed book. Maybe it causes one to lose all control of the logic portion of the brain. Sheeesh!

Item - I guess that much like Mark Twain's reported premature death, some Disney comics still have a pulse, despite what the Price Guides opine!

Four Color #9 (Donald Duck Pirate's Gold) VG (CGC 4.0) \$1,725 (1.40X); Uncle Scrooge #5 FN \$81 (1.02X), #8 VG/FN \$46 (1.22X), #9 FN+ \$96.75 (signed by Barks 2.15X), #22 VF/NM 142.50 (1.67X), #25, 44, 47, 48 (all NM) at Guide, #60 VF/NM \$82 (1.18X), #64 NM \$108 (1.08X), #71, 73, 75, 78, 79 (all NM) at Guide, #111, 114, 16, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130 (all NM) at Guide, #179 FR \$230 (40X Guide... Yes, Virginia, that is F-O-R-T-Y times Guide for a Fair!); Walt Disney's Comics and Stories #31 AppFN/VF (signed by Barks) \$1,430 (1.04X); DUCKHUNTER Fanzine issues #1 (Summer 1995) and #2 (Winter 1995) NM \$104 each. The Barks Collector and the Duckburg Times (both fanzines) still hold their own at between \$5-\$10 each. The first five issues of The Barks Collectors are the most difficult to locate.

As to be expected, after the recent death of Unca Carl a flood of Barks related material has hit the marketplace. Like so many coins in Scrooge's Money Bin, the Another Rainbow and German produced "313" lithos are all over the Internet, causing some uncertainty and

Golden Age (1935-1955): Kind of quiet this month. We did pick up a run of Batman #51-100. Most collectors cannot afford the better Golden Age comics. Demand was light this month. I am seeing more and more

instability in that marketplace. Now's the time to pick up one of your favorite images while there's a perceived "glut" on the market!

Item - A special thanks to vigilant MarketWatcher Jeff Rader for giving me the heads up on the King of Fast Food, Ronald McDonald. Looks like there are hardcore collectors who'll pay big burger bucks for issues from the short-lived 4 issue Charlton series from 1970-71. Issue #1 NM recently sold for \$105 (1.75X), #1 GD \$16.50 (3X), #1 GD \$14.50 (2.63X) and issue #3 in VF sold for \$77 (3.4X).

Item - Dark Shadows, the TV cult favorite of the late sixties and Gold Key title, continues to be a underachiever. Recent sales include #12, 13, 15, 16, 20 NM (File Copies) \$25 each (.55X Guide), issues #23, 25, 30 and 32 NM (File Copies) \$20 each (.57X Guide). These appear to be a good bargain on NM 30 year old books!

Item - Noted variant collector Bill Alexander pointed out that Marvel's Gothic Tales Of Love magazine #1 and #2 both sport a 60¢ cover price on the cover, but on the inside title page of both of these rare magazines it states 75 cents per copy! Could there possibly be variant cyps of G.T.O.L #1 and #2 that exist with a 75¢ cover price? Or is this another printers error similar to the Strange Tales #113 that I reported last month? Quick... everyone to the magazine bins!

This is my last CBM column of the millennium (the "real" New Millennium starts in 2001). CBM #84 will be out in early 2001, so you'll just have to go "cold turkey" without my pointed opinions, sales results, and observations for a while. I encourage you to contact me anytime with marketplace news, sales figures, and reports. Until then!

restored books from this period as well. We as a hobby really need to address the issue of restored book valuation (listings and general information) in the next Price Guide. Not all books would be listed—lets start with key popular issues and go from there. The time has come!

Golden Age Sales: Action #11 GD \$350; Batman #62 VG \$250, #100 FN \$500; Four Color #108 VG \$125; Prize #66 VG \$22; Superman #12 FN \$400.

Art, Toys & Disneyana: We bought a large vintage Disney collection this month. Lots of early Disneyland items and 1940's-1950's cartoon and movie pieces. These items have always had a good sales record for us—we should do well with this group. Demand continues for 1960's TV and comic character toys. We do not see as much of this material as we could use. We did get in the 1966 Aurora Bride of Frankenstein model kit. I also get requests for original art but have had little offered to me in recent months.

Art, Toys & Disneyana Sales: Wolfman Aurora kit in box \$150, Disneyland 1964 guidebook \$35, Flintstones cel \$50, Capt. Action doll in box \$495.

That will wrap up our month. Don't forget—comic books are meant to be read and enjoyed—not to be slabbed and stuck in some bank vault! Have a great month!

ROBERT BEERBOHM COMIC ART

PO BOX 507

FREMONT, NE 68026

402•727•4071

beerbohm@teknetwork.com

I have been working on restructuring the entire Overstreet Platinum Age section. It is currently at seven pages of price listings. Working with fellow collectors in the PlatinumAge Comics@eGroups.com list we now have almost doubled the size for the 2001 Guide to 13 pages and it might go to 14 pages There will be a total of 21 pages in the Platinum section in Overstreet devoted to this specialized area of comic book collecting. Maybe one day an international index/price guide to pre-1935 comics books in all their glorious varied formats and venues will be compiled. A great number of Plat hard cover type comic books had dust jackets. LOA, Moon Mullins, M&J Big

Books all had Djs. The LOA, Smitty, Tail Spin Tommy, Dick Tracy, Felix, and others (like the Briggs books) originally came in boxes with box art by the artist.

This Caveat will appear in the Platinum section. COLLECTORS NOTE: The books listed in this section were published decades before organized comics fandom began archiving and helping to preserve these fragile popular culture artifacts. Consequently, copies of most all of these comics almost never surface in Fine+ or better shape. Most are in the Good to VG range. If you want to collect these only in high grade, your collection will be very small.

The earliest daily strip reprint book, Brainy Bowers, has been sorted out, displacing "King for a Year" Outbursts of Everett True, which had displaced long time (ala Babe Ruth) record holder Mutt & Jeff Ball series which began in 1910.

There is life outside of the so-called "Golden Age" of stuff from the 1930s up. Many collectors are entering the Platinum area of the hobby. If you know of an American comic book in "it doesn't matter what format" not yet listed in the 2000 Overstreet, please send in yer info now. I will be closing this off the middle of November—and letting Bob O's staff finish off the cosmetic fine tuning so their book is in synch. "There be life after superheroes."

Some recent sales of note: Barney Google GD/VG (1923) \$41; Bringing Up Father FR (2nd series 1919) \$15; Funny Larks of Hans und Fritz FR/GD (1916) \$153.50; Little Orphan Annie FR/GD (1926) \$15.50; Mutt and Jeff Cartoons FN (1910) \$21.50; The Nebbs GD (1928) \$72; Tillie the Toiler #7 FN (1932) \$30.

SCOTT MCADAM • TREASURES OF YOUTH

1201 C STREET
HAYWARD, CA 94541
510•888•9675
smcatoyguy@aol.com

San Diego was just plain great this year. High grade and low grade stuff sold quite well. High grade stuff for premium prices! Large amounts of Marvels and DC's sold very well from 50% off boxes from late '50s (DC's, of course) up to mid '70s in low to mid-grade. Many people were just shopping from lists and filling in runs and not asking what the CGC grade might be on this book HA-HA-HA! Just

picked up a 297 comic original owner collection in mid-grade from the early '50s mostly Crime (75%) and Horror/Sci-Fi (20%) with Miscellaneous (5%).

I have some books that will eventually be going onto eBay because of their rarity and demand. These include Monster Crime #1 Hillman one-shot 1952 and Crime Must Stop #1 also a Hillman one-shot with fabulous horror Cover. I have recently closed my store to concentrate on shows and eBay sales. At the store, I never dealt in new comics and collectors don't seem to frequent stores for old comics on a regular basis anymore. My sales dropped and I needed to prioritize my time to take advantage of the avenues that can make more money. I will be able to tell if this was a good idea by early next year before San Francisco Bay Area's Wonder-Con. Thanks for reading my soapbox and keep collecting old comics because... THEY ARE COOL!

Batman #107 NM- \$400; Captain Science # 1 FN- \$200; Crime Suspense #14 FN- \$60 Detective #233 VF++ \$1,500; Eerie # 1 VG \$105, # 2 VG- \$115; Fantastic Four # 1 FR + \$450; Girl # 8 VG/FN \$25; Jimmy Olsen #18 VF/NM \$100; Prison Break # 2 VG/FN \$95; Real Clue Crime V 7 # 12 VG+ \$25; Sensation # 99 VG++ \$80; Showcase # 9 VG/FN \$1,500; Superman #106 VF/NM \$350; Suspense # 4 VG/FN \$70; War # 11 FR/GD \$15; World's Finest #86 VF/NM \$175.



Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

Comic Book MARKETPLACE

Advertising Rates

The Best Ad Rates in Town!

FULL PAGE AD
(7 1/8 WIDE X 9 5/8" TALL)
\$400.00

HALF PAGE HORIZONTAL
(7 1/8 WIDE X 4 5/8" TALL)
\$300.00

THIRD PAGE VERTICAL
(2 1/4 WIDE X 9 1/4" TALL)
\$235.00

QUARTER PAGE
(4 5/8 WIDE X 3 3/4" TALL)
\$190.00

BIG/LITTLE AD
(BUSINESS CARD 3 1/2 WIDE X 2" TALL)
\$75.00

**Contract advertisers—
ask for your discount.**

*Above rates are for black & white
camera-ready ads. Include payment
with ad copy and
forward to the address below.
The ad deadline is the 10th.
Rate Card and further information
available upon request.*

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE
P.O. BOX 180700
CORONADO • CA • 92178-0700

CONTACT: CBM ADVERTISING



619 • 437 • 1996

FAX

619 • 437 • 1993



MARKETPLACE MAIL

(Continued from page 10)

of all decisions for an obsessed collector like myself. Let me recount the glorious yet wrenching event for you. I was out on one of my weekly treasure hunts and stopped at a local church sale. Nothing unusual; used hair nets, tube socks and Jack Jones albums were in abundance. As I was about to give up, I spied a small pile of comic books on an old lady's table. I leafed through to find several 1950's Atlas comics. The titles were Astonishing and Tales to keep you SpellBound. The condition could only be described as Pristine Poor. These babies were ripped and soiled to the max, and brittle as a Ritz Cracker.

I inquired anyway. The little old lady said firmly "one dollar apiece!" I bought two and started to walk away. As an afterthought I turned to the woman and asked if she had anymore like these. She looked me in the eye and said "Sure do, I got two-hundred more at home."

Visions of Bethlehem collection magnitude flashed through my deluded mind. Two hundred? There had to be at least one or two good ones in there. I politely inquired if I could see them. With some hesitance she said I could see them; with an exception. A certain gentleman had already inquired and was due to see them the next morning. Evil thoughts filled my mind. I tried not to show my lecherous, scheming machinations as I calmly asked if maybe I could see them BEFORE the other man.

She looked at me out of the corner of one eye. She was still hesitant, untrusting. "I don't know" she said. "He's coming tomorrow and I go to bed early tonight. I really don't know."

I promised her I would only take a short time and also guaranteed her at least three times what she was asking for the books for any I would buy. She still wouldn't promise but gave me her number reluctantly and I said I would call her. I got home and waited anxiously to call her at the appointed time. It was already dusk. After a few busy signals (and much consternation on my part) I got through. She seemed a little aggravated but with some persuasion said it was OK to come over but just for 20 minutes and no more.

Then she said the words that struck terror in my heart. "Whatever happens, you can only pick ONE HUNDRED comics and NO MORE!" I tried to forget that menacing limitation as I headed towards her house in the pitch black. I pulled up to a small unassuming little bungalow. The lady

was at the door and welcomed me in. She motioned me into her kitchen and sat me down. She reiterated. "You can only pick out ONE-HUNDRED and no more!"

At this point I felt a little annoyed yet still my palms were sweating. It was probably two hundred mangled Archie comics (nothing against Archie but I was hoping for something a little better). Well it wasn't, my friends. She opened her kitchen closet and inside were two towering stacks of lovely little gems. On the top of the first stack was a beautiful VF copy of Space War #4. I felt an excitement that only comes with the thrill of the hunt and the aroma of newsprint. An embarrassing flush of greed and comic-lust. My hands were shaking. The next book was an FN+ Amazing Adult Fantasy #14. (oh, the difference one numeral can make).

Each successive book lifted off the pile revealed another beauty. House of Mystery, Tales to Astonish, Strange Adventures, a FN Showcase #12, FN/VF New adventures of Charlie Chan #4, Tales of the Mysterious Traveler in VF... numerous VG early pre-Code horror, too many to list.

These books were nothing like those fish wrappers at the church sale. Then the sharp reminder again; only 100! I started weeding. It was almost impossible. I put back a FN Astonishing #8 only to grab it back. I couldn't do

it. She said sternly "I have to get to bed, pick the ones you want!"

My pulse was racing with indecision. I went through the pile again. It felt like a dream. When would I wake up? I snapped out of it and decisively plucked 115 of the nicest books she had hoping she would wouldn't check the number. She dutifully counted and told me I have to put at least ten back. I put eight back and paid what I said: three times what she wanted, \$3 each.

I don't even want to think about what I left behind but I walked out and never looked back. On the way home I felt some pangs of guilt. I only paid \$3 a piece for some comics worth hundreds; I schemed to gain advantage over my fellow man; I coveted my neighbors goods and walked away with them too. But when I got home and laid those beauties out on the floor those feelings quickly disappeared. Old Comic books have the ability to cloud men's minds and lead them to the brink of destruction. To behave in ways they only would to impress a pretty girl. To scheme, lie, cheat and fabricate. Although, I should also add: Sometimes the catch really is as good as the hunt.

I have to say that CBM is always the highlight of my mailbox and whenever it's late, I get a strange little itch in my mind that says "Where the hell is my new CBM?" Keep up the good work. And Lisa, the art direction is classic yet fresh and always top notch. I'm a fan. Can you tell? Signed, Dr. Evil (Actually, dutiful CBM subscriber...)

Dan Braun, New York)

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

12 issues for \$60

**Have CBM mailed
right to your front door!**

Mail check or MO payable to
Gemstone Publishing,
PO Box 180700, Coronado, CA 92178
MasterCard/Visa orders call
(619) 437-1996

(U.S. FUNDS. MO & MD RESIDENTS ADD SALES TAX)

FOREIGN SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Canada/Mexico \$62, Great Britain/
France/Norway/Germany/
Western Europe \$110,
Japan/Singapore/Philippines/Australia/
Asian Pacific Rim \$120 (All in U.S. Funds)

All Star Western #72

Just wanted to make some comments about Gene Reed's letter in CBM and his search for All Star Western #72. That very issue was the one that I needed to complete my run of ASW, and I got very lucky and found it at Bedrock Comics while at Comic-Con International this past summer. Boy, was I glad to find that one! I had been looking for a long, long time. If Gene Reed, and the others searching for that issue, don't find copies as a result of his letter, let me know, and you can give him my e-mail address. Maybe, I could help out some way.

Why that issue seems to be the hardest one to find puzzles me. In Gerber's it has an S.I. number of "5" which means there should be anywhere from 200 to 1000 copies. Surely, not all of the known copies are in collector's hands. You

would think that a small percentage would be available for sale.

Which leads me to ask this question: should some of the Scarcity Index Numbers in Gerber's be reevaluated? Believe me, what he did to produce those wonderful volumes is amazing! Even coming up, after all of the research, with scarcity ratings is a good thing. Gerber's is probably the best reference, ever! But according to some of the S.I. numbers, some of those books, like All Star Western #72, should be easier to find. In all of my searching for that issue, and I looked a lot, it probably took me a year to find that one! And I don't believe I ever saw it listed anywhere for sale or auction! I was thrilled to find it—at last!

I don't propose that all of the S.I. numbers need to be reevaluated; just a handful of books need to be rated a little scarcer. The downside, however, of changing a rating would be that some sellers would try to leverage higher prices for some books if they were perceived as being more scarce! I'm sure that upping a book from a "5" to a "6" would affect prices. At the same time, downrating a book would be detrimental in

pricing; some people would lose money. So, I'm sure, the idea of reevaluating S.I. numbers would not be a popular thing to do for most sellers.

That's my two cents worth... just an opinion. Actually, overall, I'm quite happy with the S.I. numbers in Gerber's. Almost all of the time, they're on target.

Also, if Gene Reed doesn't have any luck finding that issue, you can give him my e-mail address and have him write me. Maybe, I could carefully scan my copy of the book and print off the pages for him. Best...

Steven Fears, Oklahoma

All the Ditko stories

I've long thought Tony Stark was either based on Errol Flynn, or, just as likely, Tyrone Power. A more "Kirby" type of actor might have been Victor Mature—who could easily have played Ben Grimm! Of course, someone pointed out to me that Dr. Strange was based on David Niven! (Talk about an "unlikely" super-hero!)

My favorite Kirby Iron Man was his pinch-hit in Astonish #82, the I.M.-Subby fight. The high-

energy brawl also makes me wish the often-"stuffy" Roy Thomas had teamed with Kirby more often, as they seemed to balance each other very well (imagine Roy doing dialogue for New Gods!).

I wish Chic Stone had stuck around longer. His "more playful" inks (as described here) bore the closest resemblance to a Saturday-Morning cartoon show, and many of his issues are among my favorites. (And he never quite meshed as well with, say, John Buscema...)

One of my favorite volumes of the Marvel MasterWorks series was the Dr. Strange book. Despite my having most of the stories elsewhere (either as reprints OR originals) it allows one to easily re-read so many episodes back-to-back (without "commercial interruptions"). It also was a huge blunder in my eyes, as it stopped short of compiling the ENTIRE Ditko era in one book!

Imagine if they'd gotten around to a 2nd volume—a few episodes in, a whole new rambling era would start. Far better would have been reprinting ALL the Ditko stories in one extra-

COMIC BOOKS WANTED!

We have purchased more individual comic books
and more quality collections
than any other dealer in America!

METROPOLIS

AMERICA'S #1 COMIC DEALER!

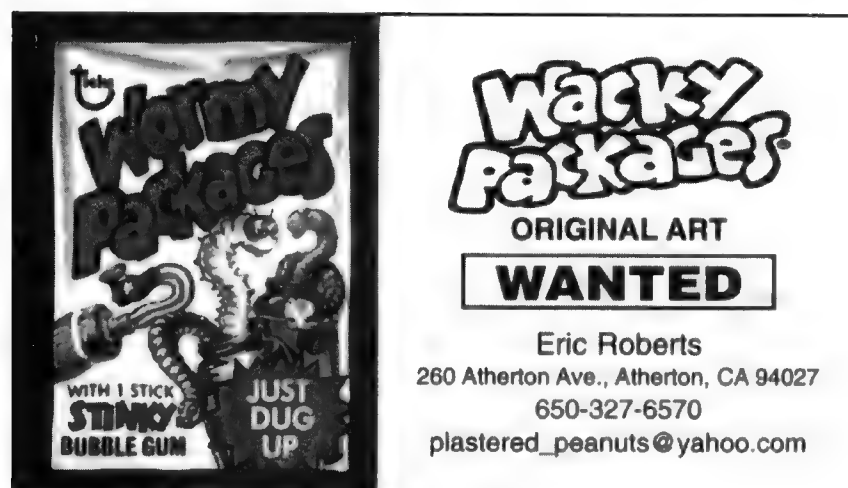
873 Broadway, Suite 201
New York, NY 10003

PH: 212-260-4147 FAX 212-260-4304 TOLL FREE: 800-229-6387



thick book, and follow it up with a 2nd volume containing ALL the episodes described in your article here! As it happens, I have ALL the original issues from #135 up (take a guess why!) and it did seem to me when I first read that run that it rambled on endlessly like a daytime

years ago!) that I realized he may have been trying to emulate the wild stuff Steranko was doing. #167 was advertised as "the world's first psychedelic pop-art comic book", and I'm guessing Adkins didn't want to look slacking! All at once, the pages seemed composed of photographs



Wacky Packages
ORIGINAL ART
WANTED

Eric Roberts
260 Atherton Ave., Atherton, CA 94027
650-327-6570
plastered_peanuts@yahoo.com

soap-opera, without any clear beginnings or endings. I did think that trip to the pharmacy was a cute way to bring Doc "back down to Earth" after the long Ditko epic, and before he'd embark on an even longer series of interdimensional adventures.

Anyone ever notice Dan Adkins' layouts got Very wild all of a sudden in Strange Tales #167? As that was the first issue I ever got my hands on, it wasn't until I bought all the others (over 20

lights". Paul Gulacy did the first 3, each a sprawling epic of action, mystery and—in the case of #2—tragic romance (it STILL hurts every time I read that one). #4 went in the other direction entirely, as Keith Pollard did a lengthy and confusing action-comedy that featured a cab driver closely based on Groucho Marx! "Give 'im what fer— and don't let 'im ask how come!"

Henry R. Kujawa, New Jersey

Eligible for a No-Prize

To The Amazing Makers of CBM... Hi there. I am writing this letter in response to, "Eligible For A No-Prize" In CBM #81. Before I reveal whatever it is my letter's focus is, I will state that, unlike many who collect CBM (or my impression of CBM collectors, at least), I am not a really big collector of old comics. I have neither the resources to buy the old comics, nor the time. I am but 16 years of age, (17 in December) and, while I am quite knowledgeable of a large chunk of the comics industry of today and yesterday, I don't know everything that you others may know.

But let's get to the purpose of the letter! I was reading the "Eligible for A No-Prize" article, and was intrigued by the oddity of a wing on the 'X' on the cover of X-Men #7. Unfortunately, as I do not have an original copy of X-Men #7, I had to resort to looking at my supremely resourceful copy of "Marvel Masterworks #3: The X-Men."

First, I checked the restored covers of the original issues that were reprinted in normal-sized format in the book itself. I checked all ten issues of X-Men reprinted in the book. I did not see any wing, aside for issue #3, with the Blob, but that wing was supposed to be there.

I then checked the back of the book's cover, for there were small reproductions of the ten issues contained in the book there. The copies, it seems, that were used for the small reproductions must have been original X-Men issues Marvel had, because they looked used.

Then, Lo and Behold, I did find the wing on the cover of issue #7, small it may have been! I checked the other covers, and found no wing on any of them... EXCEPT FOR ONE. The cover to X-Men #5, wherein the Angel was captured by Magneto and the BoEM. If you look carefully, you should be able to see the wing there. The writer of the No-Prize letter did state that he had not seen the wing on X-Men #5, so maybe it was only printed on a small number of copies. Hmmm...! CBM Rules!

Sam Rothenberg, via Email

Covers as interior panels

CBM #81 was another great read! All the articles on Silver Age Marvel were informative and, most important, enthusiastic. I particularly enjoyed Nicholas Caputo's piece. Indeed, I was put in mind of something that has puzzled me for many years, and I'm hoping that some CBM

The Original Comic Book Memorabilia Insurance Policy

Marketed by

Cornell & Finkelmeier, Inc.

The nation's largest insurer of sports memorabilia, is proud to announce the introduction of their new insurance program specifically designed for comic book collectors and dealers including store package coverages if needed.

Phone: (800) 739-3314

PO Box 210, Wapakoneta, OH 45895

E-mail: comics@cf-insurance.com

Visit our website at www.cf-insurance.com

TravelersPropertyCasualty
A Member of TravelersGroup



reader might be able to satisfy my curiosity.

We all know that, in the Silver Age, DC occasionally reproduced covers as interior panels, reducing the art to fit. (Hawkman #7, for example). I spoke to Murphy Anderson about this and he said it was Julie Schwartz's way of ensuring that the cover truly represented the story content. A variation of this appeared in Hawkman #22 (I think it was one of the Lion Mane issues), when a story panel was enlarged to serve as the splash page.

What I want to know, however, is why, in Avengers Special #1 (1967), the figures of Captain America, Hawkeye, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch by Kirby, from the cover of Avengers #25, were reproduced in one panel of the Lee/Heck story. (I forget which page this was on and I don't have a copy to check). Does any CBM reader know? And were there any other instances of this in Marvel comics? I really need to know! Best,

Dale Coe, via Email

Not all legendary

In his article on Doc Strange in CBM #81, Myls Putnam mentions a Marvel Bulletins page noting that Dan Adkins previously worked for "a former Marvel-man". Putnam speculates it refers to Steve Ditko, but it's more likely the allusion was to Wally Wood. Adkins worked extensively for Wood, and you can see the influence clearly on the cover to this very issue of CBM.

I've been enjoying CBM for a number of months, with only one minor gripe. Could you please restrain from using the adjective "legendary" to refer to EVERY comics pro who did any work in the 40s, 50s, or 60s? It renders the word meaningless, and actually slights those to whom the term could reasonably be applied, such as creators like Kirby, Toth, Eisner, and Krigstein, etc.

Bill Sherman, via Email

It seems our use of the term "legendary" is becoming, well... legendary.

Black Manta

Have tried for years to get an answer to a question that, I'm sure, is generally insignificant to most comic book fans. I have been an Aquaman fanatic since the old Superman/Aquaman hour cartoon, and consider myself to be the world's foremost Aquaman

authority, except for the one question plaguing my every waking moment. In the Overstreet guide fails to list, year in and year out, Black Manta in the villain 1st appearance section. He murdered Aquaman's son, so I think he rates on the same plane as Ocean Master. Several guides list Aquaman #35 as the 1st appearance of Black Manta.

I have almost all More Fun, Adventure, Detective, and World's finest appearances, so I am fairly sure #35 is accurate. The problem arises when you actually read #35, and Aquaman refers to Black Manta in a familiar way, suggestive of previous battles. More to the point, is Black Manta a character taken from the cartoon, or am I missing the comic he actually first appeared in? Any help from CBM readers would be greatly appreciated! Thanks,

George Keene, Kansas

Unexplored territory

Just wanted to let you know that I continue to enjoy every issue of CBM. It's always a learning experience. My collecting tastes tend more to DC, so while I always enjoy the issues with a heavy emphasis on the DC material, I always find the issues focusing on Marvel or some other company much more informative. Issue #82, with its focus on the Marvel western heroes, was no exception. While I'm quite familiar with the DC western heroes, their Marvel counterparts are unexplored territory, so your coverage of them here opened new frontiers for me.

In CBM #81, Gene Reed asks in the letter pages if anyone has a copy of All-Star Western #72 they would be willing to scan and send to him. I've got a copy (nothing too pristine, but a nice reader) and would be happy to help him out. In fact, I'd love to correspond with anyone interested in the DC western stable.

Keep up the good work,

Mark Billian, via Email

Batman quest; Robin test

Picked up a copy of DC Comics Millennium Edition reprint of Detective Comics #38. It's great that collectors are given the opportunity to see Golden Age classics at an affordable price. The unidentified artist who drew the "Cliff Crosby" feature in that comic must have had a pile of Milt Caniff's "Terry and the Pirates" strips by his drawing board because the six pages consist almost

completely of swipes from that strip, not only the poses but also the costuming!

Maybe some knowledgeable CBM reader who is a Batman fan can help me with something that has puzzled me for over 40 years. When I was a comics-trading kid, I read a Batman and Robin back-up story where the Caped Crusader ran a test on his companion. Batman shut Robin in a cage and told him to find a way to escape. The boy tried every means with no success until Batman showed him that the cage was unlocked! The lesson: don't overlook the obvious. In which comic did this story appear? Was it ever reprinted?

Carl & Myrna, via Email

Curt Swan falls asleep?

Does any CBM reader know which issue (Action or Superman) has the secondary story where Curt Swan falls asleep drawing Superman and he 'wakes up' in the Metropolis he is so used to drawing? It ends with Curt Swan actually waking up but holding two bullets that Superman gave him. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Tony Lloyd, Cardiff, Wales

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family" now, and your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:





THE O'Neil Observer

DEDICATED TO THE STORYTELLING OF DENNY O'NEIL AND THE CRAFT OF COMIC BOOK WRITING

A Quarterly Fanzine

This Sample Issue Brought To You Courtesy of **Comic Book**
MARKETPLACE

BONUS
INSERT!

THE DENNY O'NEIL GREEN ARROW RETROSPECTIVE

by Scott McCullar



Green Arrow artwork by Scott McCullar
GREEN ARROW ©2000 DC COMICS

FOREWORD: I had the fortunate opportunity to interview Denny O'Neil by e-mail on August 30, 1998. We did a retrospective look back at his years of on-and-off writing of Green Arrow at DC Comics for my *Unofficial Green Arrow Compendium* fan website. At the time of the interview, Denny's three-part prequel entitled "Peacemakers" had just hit the stands in *Legends of the DC Universe* #7-9. The story examined the first meeting of Oliver Queen and Hal Jordan before their classic adventures as the "Hard Travelin' Heroes" had begun.

While this interview may be two years old at the time of this issue's printing in the *O'Neil Observer*, we still feel that it is worth dusting off as a relevant chronicle looking at Mr. O'Neil's 30 years of penning the adventures of the chili lovin' Emerald Archer that you may have missed if you haven't been web surfing the Internet.

Since the interview, Denny O'Neil penned a five-part story arc entitled "The Arrow and the Bat" earlier this year in *Legends of the Dark Knight* #127-131. This time around, the story examined the first meeting of Green Arrow and Batman, which he hinted about in this interview.

Currently, DC Comics is planning to release a deluxe hard back archive edition of the milestone "Hard Traveling Heroes" stories from *Green Lantern* #76-89 and *Flash* #217-219 in November. Meanwhile in the monthly comics, we will see the return of Oliver Queen in Kevin Smith's (*Daredevil*, *Dogma*, *Clerks*) relaunch of *Green Arrow* sometime early in 2001 with a brand new ongoing series.

— Scott McCullar, October 2000

An Interview with Denny O'Neil

SCOTT: First thing, Mr. O'Neil, thank you for agreeing to do an interview for the *Unofficial Green Arrow Compendium*.

DENNY: Scott, here's a shot at answering your questions. I apologize in advance for everything I can't remember.

SCOTT: Well, I'm looking for a place to begin with the questions to ask you about your work over the years with Green Arrow. I've enjoyed the past three months of your tale of Green Arrow's and Green Lantern's first meeting in *Legends of the DC Universe* #7-9. I've also been rereading some past tales that you have penned and previous interviews in the past. You did one heck of a knock out interview that covered almost every detail of the famous Green Lantern/Green Arrow story arc in *Green Lantern* #76-89 in a series that reprinted those tales in seven issues during 1983-84. I'm going to try to not be repetitive in nature with those and hopefully we can cover a broad range.

What is unique, I think here, is that I can begin asking you about the recent in *Legends of the DC Universe* #7-9 story arc "Peacemakers" that (Continued on page 71)



THE O'Neil Observer

Issue Two • Fall/Winter 2000

CONTENTS

The Denny O'Neil Green Arrow Retrospective

An interview with Denny O'Neil discussing his legendary work with the Emerald Archer! by Scott McCullar **66**

O'Notes - Fall 2000

An American second act. Ruminations on our second issue! by Bob Brodsky... **68**

Wander: O'Neil's Eclectic Masterpiece

A serial western comic with a science fiction twist! by Link Yaco..... **69**

Dean's List

Denny O'Neil's recommended reading for comic book writers! **74**

Batman and Robbins

An appreciation of Frank Robbins! by John Wells..... **75**

Aquaman and Green Arrow: The Lost Episode

An account of Aquaman #57, the final issue that never was! by Steve Skeates **77**

Steve on Strange

Steve Englehart talks to Bob Brodsky about Brunner, Colan, Gerber, Alice in Wonderland, and a certain Master of the Mystic Arts..... **78**

Dateline: 1971

A look back on one magnificent year during the Bronze Age of Comics by Bob Brodsky..... **79**

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Archie Goodwin.

TIP O' THE HAT

Thank you (in no particular order) to:

Mike Catron, Mike Grell, Deny Cowans, Meryl Cohen, Chuck Dixon & Dixonverse.com—Regulars, Neal Adams, Stephen A. Geppi, Steve Gerber, Dick Giordano, The Grateful Dead (circa 1970-1973), Jim Aparo, Kevin Hanley, Allan Asherman, Tony Isabella, Dr. Jerry Bails, Gene Keboe, Marlene and Leo Brodsky, Roxie McCullar, Amanda Kitzmiller, Gary and Lisa Carter, Stan Lee, Pierre Comtois, Elliot S! Maggin, Jon B. Cooke, Rich Morrissey, Shel Dorf, Bob Dylan, John Morrow, Gordon Hope-Murray, Steve Englehart, Anne T. Murphy, Mark Evanier, Julie Schwartz, Steve Skeates, Flo Steinberg, Roy Thomas, Gary Usher, John Wells, Link Yaco, and the Unofficial Green Arrow Message Board Fans @ www.comicboards.com/gamb

Special thanks to Denny and Marifran O'Neil whose kindness, grace, and warmth are an inspiration.

Editor • Bob Brodsky

Art Direction and Co-Editor • Scott McCullar

Editor Emeritus • Kevin Hanley

Contributors • Steve Skeates, John Wells, Link Yaco, and Denny O'Neil

Inspiration • Denny and Marifran O'Neil

The O'Neil Observer is published sort of quarterly

© Childhood Summer Publications • Issue Number 2, Fall/Winter 2000

33 East Normandy Drive, West Hartford, CT 06107 860-727-4622

www.oneilobserver.com • e-mail: brodb@aol.com

This special issue published by arrangement with Gemstone Publishing, Inc. (West)

All characters depicted or described are © their respective companies.

O'Notes

Welcome to the second issue of *The O'Neil Observer*—a place for comic book fans to analyze, discuss, and of course, celebrate the work of Denny O'Neil.

Why Denny O'Neil? I'm glad you asked. In an industry where artists tend to get a lot more recognition, Denny's work stands as a testament to the power of great comic book writing. His early '70s work at DC, especially *Batman* and *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, elevated comics to new, unprecedented levels of creativity and gave this reader much to enjoy, and ponder, in the process.

True, Denny's best scripts are intelligent and well crafted, with tight narratives and rich characterizations, but there's also a nth element in the mix that's harder to pin down. An elegance, really. Perhaps

together we can draw some conclusions about this talented man and his craft.

I'm Bob Brodsky, a 41-year-old O'Neil fan who suspects you're now wondering what the heck we're doing inside your copy of *Comic Book Marketplace*? Certainly a fair question, so let's get to it.

In the summer of 1997, I had the good fortune to interview Denny for an article that appeared in *CBM* #56 titled "Denny O'Neil: Writer on the Storm!" While preparing the piece, my collaborator, Kevin Hanley, and I came to realize that our 8,500 words were really just the starting

dream, and *O'NO* #1 didn't appear until the summer of 1999. Available for just four 39¢ stamps (Business Administration was never our best subject), we quickly "sold out" our run of 200 copies, and picked-up some good word of mouth along the way.

Over the next year or so, people continued to ask about our second issue, while we just shrugged our shoulders. As time pushed on, and the odds for *O'NO* #2 seemed less likely, Kevin and I were frustrated by financial and time considerations that had perhaps permanently stewed our creative juices. Kevin in fact decided to take a brief break from comics to pursue screen writing and other creative interests.

Then, in true superhero fashion, two gentlemen arrived on the scene to make this second issue a reality: Scott McCullar and Gary Carter.

Scott (he's going to kill me when he reads this) is the talented young writer/artist behind several leading comic book related web sites including the incredible Unofficial Green Arrow Compendium, which you simply must view for yourself. Early last spring, Scott graciously volunteered his sizable artistic, editorial, and technological skills in the service of this magazine. Suffice to say I would not be writing these words without him.

Gary Carter is of course the editor of *CBM*, a magical publication I know you all appreciate as much as I do. For over five years, Gary, Lisa, Pat, Michelle, Amanda, and a great list of contributors have provided a dream come true magazine for "the advanced comic book collector." Gary's easy laugh and genuine warmth disarm you to the point of forgetting he is in the top ranks of expert comic book scholars.

Now before Gary turns redder than the Vision's face, I'd better cut the hosannas and cut to the chase.

Soon after I connected with Scott, a chance conversation with Gary resulted in him asking me if we'd be interested in producing *O'NO* #2 as an insert to an issue of *CBM*. Needless to say, I was thrilled by Gary's offer, and the opportunity to be associated with his magazine and its audience.

Well here we are.

Please remember that nothing happens without you!

We beg your comments, articles, artwork, or whatever else you'd like to contribute.

Please send your correspondence to:

The O'Neil Observer
33 East Normandy Drive
West Hartford, CT 06107
E mail: broddb@aol.com

In closing, I'd like to thank my friend and brother Kevin Hanley for his efforts on *O'NO* #1, and all the bone-headed stuff we've done over the past twenty five years.

—Bob Brodsky



The O'Neil Observer
No. 1, Summer '99
Dedicated to the art of Denny O'Neil and the craft of Comic Book Writing

The Dean on The King
Denny O'Neil Discusses Jack Kirby.
by Bob Brodsky

Like Jack Kirby, Denny O'Neil stands as one of comic's most important talents. While Kirby's best work relied mostly on the power of his artwork and the cosmic scope of his ideas, O'Neil has walked a different sort of beat. For nearly 35 years he has infused his writing with intelligence, craft, and groundbreaking characterization.

Originally a journalist, O'Neil began his comics' career at Marvel in 1965, writing Dr. Strange and the occasional Daredevil story for Stan Lee. In 1967 he joined Dick Giordano at Charlton, where, under the pen name "Sergius O'Shagossy," he contributed the well-remembered comic book novel "Children of Deers" and "Wonder," a marvelous science-fiction/horror story.

O'Neil came to DC with Giordano in late 1967 and promptly settled into an incredible six-year run that began with *The New Wonder Woman* in 1968 and ended with *The Shadow* in 1974. O'Neil's considerable creative accomplishments during this period included updating the Justice League and Supergirl, returning Batman to his "doomed avenger" roots, and introducing "the



O'Neil, Adams, Edwards, and the Revolving of Gotham City's Planet. Page 18.



Didn't You Used to be Sergio O'Shagossy? Page 28.

\$3.00

avenger" to comics with his and Neal Adams' scripting *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* series. In the process, he elevated comics to a new place of respect among fans, professionals and, incredibly enough, the "real world" outside the medium.

O'Neil left DC to assume a position at Marvel in the late 1970s. At Marvel, he detailed Tony Stark's struggle with alcoholism in *Iron Man* and mentored a young Frank Miller before returning to DC in 1985. The late 1980s brought his gritty revival of Steve Ditko's 1960s Charlton character, *The Question*, a series O'Neil considers his most honest work to date.

New group editor of the *Blazeon* line and the writer/creator of *Aurora*, O'Neil has also written extensively outside of comics including novels, teleplays and short stories.

(Jack Kirby personified perhaps the greatest creative need in comics' history, in addition to creating *Capitol America* in 1941, Kirby and partner Joe Simon are credited with launching an entire genre of comics with the release of *Young Men* in 1947. Kirby's imaginative scope of perspective and depiction of dynamic movement defined action like no one before or since. Few have realized the potential of comic books as his did.

Beginning with the *Traumatic Four* in 1951, Kirby's distinctive visual style and visionary spirit combined with the innovation and



Justice League, Inc. Art by Jack Kirby and Mike Royer, script by Denny O'Neil. © DC Comics 1999.

continued on page 22

Inside: Englehart, Evenden, Maggin, News, Reviews, and More!!!

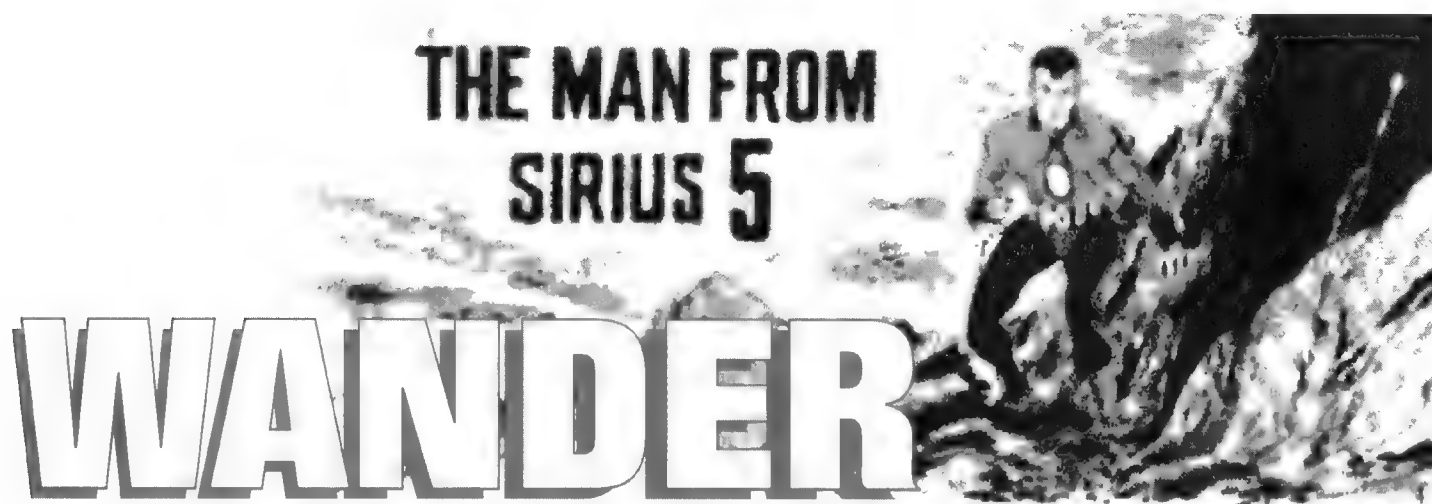
point for a long overdue appraisal of Denny's work.

Sitting together side-by-side on late weekend nights, banging out the article over my clunky, outdated Mac, Kevin and I also got to talking about many of Denny's contemporaries. It seemed to us that the exciting, innovative writers of the late Silver and early Bronze Age, guys like Gerber, Englehart, Skeates, and Maggin, had not seen their work discussed in the fan press with anywhere near the reverence and detail they deserved.

Well, in early 1998, before our *CBM* article saw print, Kevin and I had already decided to publish *The O'Neil Observer*, a fanzine dedicated to Denny and his fellow wordsmiths. Our aim was to provide thoughtful, thorough coverage of the comic book writer and his or her craft.

Alas, "the real world" soon enough intruded upon our

IN MID-1967, AFTER WRITING DR. STRANGE AND A FEW OTHER MISCELLANEOUS SCRIPTS, DENNY O'NEIL FOUND HIS ASSIGNMENTS DWINDLING AT MARVEL AND SO BEGAN WORKING AT CHARLTON, UNDER THE NAME SERGIUS O'SHAUGNESSY. THERE, HE WROTE A SERIAL WESTERN COMIC... WITH A SCIENCE FICTION TWIST. THE COMIC WAS "WANDER."



O'NEIL'S ECLECTIC MASTERPIECE

The Starcrossed Adventures of the Alien Cowboy by Link Yaco

With great thanks to Mike Catron for his fact-checking!

Wander started in *Cheyenne Kid* #66 and ended in #87. However, Wander did not appear in issues #79 and #84. There were 20 stories in all.

The Wander stories in #66-69 were nine pages long; #70-72 were seven pages; #73-78 and #80-81 were eight pages; #82 was seven pages; while #83 and #85-87 were six pages.

Denny wrote the Wander stories that appeared in #66-72. Don Arneson wrote the Wander stories in *Cheyenne Kid* #73-78, 80-81. Joe Gill wrote the Wander stories in *Cheyenne Kid* #82-83 and 85-87.

Jim Aparo drew the Wander stories in *Cheyenne Kid* #66-71. Fred Himes drew the Wander stories in *Cheyenne Kid* #72-78, #81-83, #85-87. Charles Nicholas drew the story in #80. This is the Charlton Charles Nicolas, not to be confused with DC's Charles Nicolas Cuidera. Both of them have been considered for credit being the "Charles Nicolas" who created and had the by-line on the Blue Beetle, long before the Beetle became a Charlton or DC property. Incidentally, at one point, Nicolas Cardy claimed the creation of the Blue Beetle. In later issues, 72 to 87, Fred Himes continued the character.

The saga of Wander was finally brought to a conclusion in #87 when the Sirian traveling sales representative was finally returned to his home planet. This final episode was the only I know of that was ever reprinted, in a Modern Comics edition in the late 1970s.

Cheyenne Kid was a minor cowpoke flick in 1933, but it bore less than slight resemblance to the eponymous Charlton comic character and even less than that to Wander. To quote W. C. Fields, "Somewhere between nil and zero." Charlton never claimed any connection to the minor film and just as well for, at least in the case of Pat Boyette's interpretation of the *Cheyenne Kid* in the later issues, it was far superior to the original film.

But Wander was the real gem of the book. Jim Aparo illustrated it and that was one of several parallels between O'Neil's Wander and Steve Skeates' "Thane of Bagarth." Skeates was (and remains, I suppose) in O'Neil's age group. They were in their early twenties, then. Both wrote for Charlton and often used pseudonyms. Skeates' Thane was also a historical series, but with a medieval setting. Thane, which ran as a back-up feature in *Hercules* from

#1 to 13, was, like the O'Neil Wonders, mostly illustrated by Aparo (for nine of the 13 episodes) and, like Wander, just one episode by Charles Nicolas (in his inevitable pairing with Vince Alascia) for one episode (in *Hercules* #5). As well, all episodes ran either eight or nine pages in length. One episode of Thane (in *Hercules* #5) even had a science fiction element introduced.

Both were hippie-ish experimentalists, but Skeates was more concerned with form. Experiments in style and word games were his primary concerns. O'Neil had other interests, more oriented toward actual content.

O'Neil's early work always had four elements that were very apparent. One was an obvious familiarity with the more sophisticated science fiction literature of the era. Another was a social concern. The third was an interest with and a facility for the creation and development of distinct characters. The fourth was a serious literary background.

The element of sophisticated science fiction is apparent in the basic premise of the series. Wander was an alien trapped on earth in the Old West. Historically speaking, the "Old West" of the movies and comics was a brief era after the Civil War (1861-1865) and before the invention of the automobile (Karl Benz was first, in 1885, and Henry Ford founded his company in

O'NEIL AND SKEATES WERE MUCH ALIKE.
IN PART, THIS WAS BECAUSE THEY WERE GOOD
FRIENDS... UNTIL THEIR FALLING OUT
SEVERAL DECADES LATER.

1903). The SF element of note here, however, is that Wander learned English from studying an Elizabethan text (Quenn Elizabeth died in 1603) and that was the English he spoke. The book was the same grammar text that Shakespeare studied from. Consequently, Wander spoke a Shakespearean English. More on that un-named grammar text later.

This evokes a sound astronomical fact. The distance between stars is immense and would take a great deal of time to cross. Any journey between stars would take many years, if not centuries. If a starship came to Earth, picked up a book, returned home, and then came back again, that book would be centuries out of date. Wander was from Sirius Five. Sirius is the "Dog Star," the brightest star in the sky, in the Canis Major constellation. That's so far away that even light takes decades to travel from there to here.

The collision of the cultural sensibilities of three cultures shows O'Neil's social interests at play. He got to, humorously contrast the Old West with the Elizabethan manners Wander had studied, as well as the high-tech sensibility that Wander was raised with.

O'Neil's skill at creating distinct and different characters is visible in high relief in this work. Wander fell in with a traveling patent medicine, or snake oil, show, led by an obvious W. C. Fields type of character, Professor Phineas

THIS VERY ARTY MIXTURE OF ERAS—
ELIZABETHAN, OLD WEST, AND
HIGH-TECH COMMERCIALISM—IS THE
VERY DEFINITION OF POST-MODERNISM.

Bloat. O'Neil is not only capable of producing convincing Shakespearean speech, but his is also able to reproduce the sardonic drawl of Fields.

And Wander's very creditable Elizabethan speech gave O'Neil an outlet for his literary side as well. Wander didn't speak ageless sonnets, but his archaic English is far more authentic than just a few "thees" and "thous" tossed in arbitrarily. Shakespeare it ain't. Nor Bacon, Sidney, or Spencer. But it might compare favorably with some of the second tier authors of the Elizabethan literary world such as Grenville. My apologies to any admirers of "The Faerie Queen." Maybe dialog such as, "The knave!.. He attacks while his opponents back is turned! By my father's beard, 'tis a situation that calls for changing!" doesn't compare with Grenville. Works for me, though, even with the grammatical errors: "opponents" should have an apostrophe and the ellipsis that follows "The knave!.." is incorrect and should have three periods, not two. As if any one cares that editor Sal Gentile's proofreading wasn't up to the standards of E. B. White's "Elements of Style."

But, of course, there were no grammar rules in the age of Shakespeare. The bard himself didn't worry about spelling, let alone grammar. He didn't even bother to spell his own name the same way. Sometimes he used "Shakespeare," sometimes "Shakspur," and many variations in between. There were no common spellings, no dictionaries, and certainly no English



grammar texts, only Latin texts. Say, wait a minute! Didn't Wander learn his English from just such a hypothetical text? (Oh, it's only a comic book!)

This wonderful mixture of history, humor, social commentary, and science fiction only lasted a few issues as a back-up feature in a minor cowboy comic. Few people saw it at the time and fewer still remember it. Those that do, however, recall it as one of the most obscure and bizarre experiments of 1960's comics, and the fact that it was secreted away in a very mundane cowboy comic made it all the more a delightful discovery.

There were only seven O'Neil Wander tales. These amounted to 58 pages. There are 13 Arneson and Gill tales, which amounts to another 101 pages. By itself or with the Arneson and Gill material, O'Neil's Wander saga would make a nice volume.

As much as I like O'Neil's DC work that followed, no matter how well you do superhero stuff, it's still basically kiddy stuff. Wander was closer to a genuine adult form of comic literature and will always remain my favorite.

One final ingredient to the Wander feast was the illustration of Jim Aparo. When Aparo moved to DC with Giordano and the rest of the Charlton bunch, his work became more in tune with mainstream sensibilities. He began to look a lot like Neal Adams, especially when he did Batman. At one point, Aparo and Adams traded chapters in an Aquaman-Deadman semi-team-up and the comparison of their styles was unavoidable. But in his Charlton days, Aparo looked like no one else. His style was entirely his own. One curious feature of that style was that all his characters, Wander more than the rest lacked complete noses!

Aparo tended to skimp on the detail when it came to the nose. You might catch a glimpse of one nostril and a shadow would define part of the bridge of the nose, but for the most part, the most distinctive feature of the face was oddly out of focus. It made his work unique and instantly recognizable. It also made his characters look somewhat bizarre, which was utterly appropriate for Wander.

As well, Aparo excelled at the psychedelic free-form abstract shapes that were part of the sensibilities of the 1960s, and he managed to work these into a number of panels, especially the Thane story in *Hercules* #5! And dig the moir' patterns in the zipatone background in the opening splash in the Wander episode in *Cheyenne Kid* #69. And all those Gene Colan-style rhomboid-shaped panels! But Aparo didn't use druggy swirls and zig-zagging panels to avoid doing the grunt work of background detail. Despite Charlton's notoriously low page rate, he never hesitated to load a scene with historical detail. Every piece of furniture and architecture is covered with the ornamental filigree that was the vogue in that era. That sort of over-decoration was the design style that Oscar Wilde lectured against when he came to the American West to champion the cause of the minimalist Art Nouveau that was evolving at the time. Oscar Wilde lecturing Texans on design style is one of those beautiful factual, historical events that seems like an eclectic cultural collision straight out of an O'Neil story. But whether Wilde liked it or not, when Aparo drew it, it looked authentic and psychedelic at the same time!

The good news for O'Neil collectors is that these Wander issues are so underrated that you can pick them up for the price of a new comic... between two and five dollars each. The bad news is that they are so obscure and the original distribution so limited, that it is very difficult to find any dealer that has them! ■

Link Yaco has written comic books for several publishers. He co-wrote the Marvel-authorized "Science of the X-Men," released in hardcover in August 2000. Check out his web page <http://members.aol.com/lexicon70s/index.html>

Dennis O'Neil Interview

(Continued from page 66)

brought you back almost full circle to where you began nearly 30 years ago with the Green Arrow and Green Lantern team ups. How did it feel to write a tale of Hal Jordan and Oliver Queen again?

DENNY: I loved getting back to those guys. Most fun I had in front of a keyboard last year.

SCOTT: I mentioned to you outside this interview, that I am 27. To add to that, the future Green Arrow writer for next year, Kevin Smith, is about a year older than I am. We were born during the infamous 1970-1972 period in which you wrote the first set of Green Lantern/Green Arrow team up tales in *Green Lantern* #76-89. Even still, there are several folks who are the ages of Kevin Smith or myself and younger who still are thrilled with these classic tales who weren't there for the first run when they originally came out. One great thing that has helped has been that DC Comics has reprinted these stories over the years. What do you think of all the praise by the original fans then, and all the younger fans discovering this years later?

DENNY: It's a kick—a gratifying one—to learn that someone who was born while I was writing the original GL/GA stuff is reading it. We were aware that we were, sort of, pushing the envelope, but I never expected anyone to be discussing those stories 27 years later.

SCOTT: You probably have already answered a million questions or so on this famous run, so forgive me for asking question #1,000,001. There have been a great many number of positive words written about this series over the years. It is held up in high regard then and now. It dealt with the social issues of the times. Some of these obstacles in life we still have today along with countless others. Sometimes the bad guys don't wear spandex tights and a villainous mask. How do you feel these stories have held up through the tests of time?

DENNY: Well, a few years ago, when Mari and I were rereading them and looking for Dylan quotes for the *Hard Travelin' Heroes* paperback, I was pleasantly surprised. Given that they were blatantly topical, they're okay after all these years. Maybe because, then as now, Neal and I always felt our primary task was to deliver the kind of fantasy-melodrama that people buy superhero comics to get. And, alas, the problems we dramatized are still with us—we've not made much progress in the past quarter century in solving the biggies.

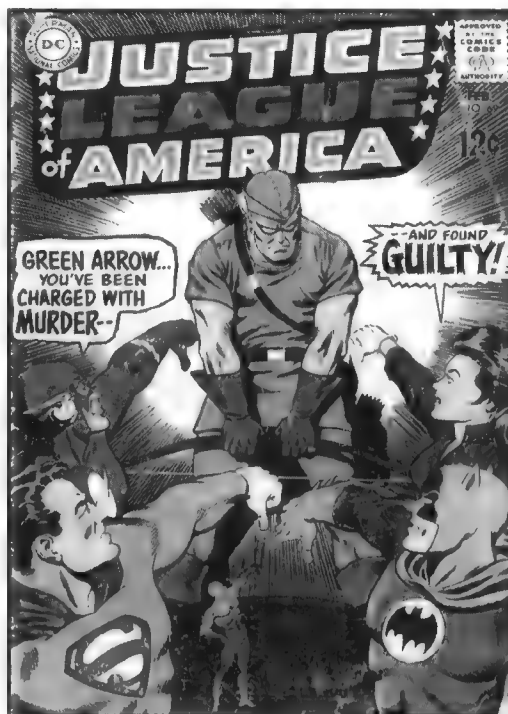
SCOTT: The third and final part of the *Legends of the DC Universe* three-part story arc just came out this August and fans should be able to still pick it up at their comic book stores at the time of this interview. Since the *Legends of the DC Universe* story arc was so closely related as a sort of prequel to the original 1970-1972 story arc, I will intertwine questions that specifically have to do with the recent series and with your early work with Green Arrow.

Did the Oliver Queen and the Hal Jordan you were writing now in *Legends of the DC Universe* story arc seem different to you since you were writing about an early part of their career in the Post-Zero Hour Universe?

DENNY: I tried to ape my old style and approach... well, that's not strictly true. I didn't use thought balloons and I eschewed sound effects—both staples back in the GL/GA era—but I did try to put myself into the head I wore in the '60s and '70s. So the characters seemed largely the same, but a bit more interesting. That may be because nowadays we're allowed to give

them a bit more of an edge (and I may have actually learned a few things about writing dramatic narrative.) For example, some have remarked that when we meet Ollie, he seems like a jerk. Yes, exactly. Part of what the story is about is Ollie's journey from self-centered narcissist to hero. Hal, I think, was pretty much as originally portrayed—an establishment guy, but the best establishment guy anyone's ever met.

SCOTT: To deal with a bit more on Ollie, reading the current story arc and past issues over the decades, it is my opinion that you have given Oliver



Queen a unique vocabulary of dialogue in what he says. I chuckle every time in almost every tale that you wrote to some of the comments and snide remarks Ollie speaks. In my opinion, you seem to give Ollie a distinctive voice and mannerisms when you write him that I can pick out over other writers. Do you remember when you decided to make Green Arrow the wise-cracking guy that he is and what brought that about?

DENNY: No. I guess I was trying to give him a distinct and interesting set of characteristics and, most importantly, make him different from Hal. So—I'm guessing, because I really don't remember—his personality was, as much as anything else, probably dictated by needs of the series and plots.

SCOTT: In *Legends of the DC Universe* #7, we see a nameless beautiful blond woman who seems to be telling Ollie that she has something important to tell him that she learned from the doctor. For those putting two and two together, it definitely appears she is trying to break the news to him that she is pregnant with his child.

Ollie has gained the reputation, especially in the past decade, as being the 'Captain Kirk of the DC Universe' in his way with the women. Oliver is a sort of womanizer who has loved them and left them. What do you think about this direction in giving Ollie this womanizing streak and sense of personal irresponsibility in his character?

DENNY: Ollie's Lothario riff was given him by later writers. I saw him as basically monogamous, though maybe a little allergic to marriage vows. But for dramatic purposes—making him a jerk so he'd have something to evolve from—the womanizing was useful and I kept it a part of him in *Peacemakers*.

SCOTT: To even add to the mystery of the blond woman, there has been speculation to who she was. Did you intentionally mean to leave her nameless or did you have it in mind that she might have been someone specific?

I've even read opinions that the nameless blond could have been the original Miss Arrowette (Bonnie King) or a girlfriend named Holly mentioned in *Green Arrow Annual* #7 who was later killed.

DENNY: I deliberately left the blonde nameless. With more room—I had

only 66 pages—I might have given her a bit more character. But for purposes of this story, her function was to dramatize Ollie's irresponsibility.

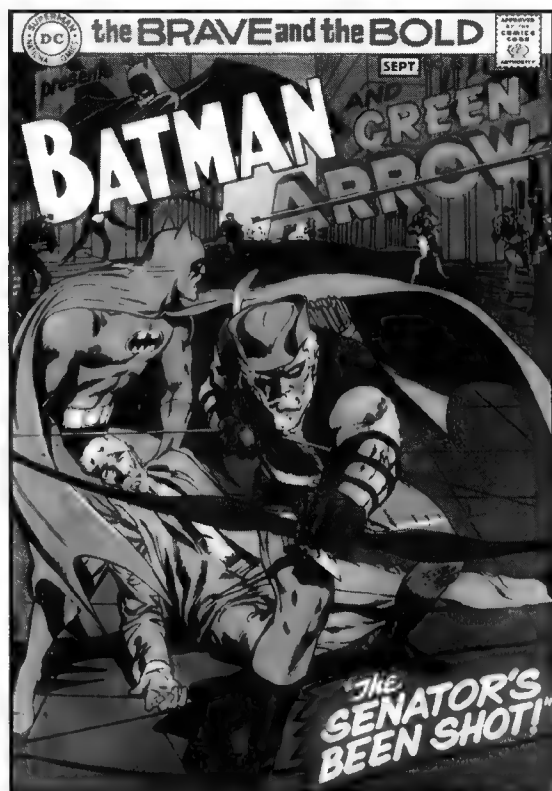
SCOTT: At the recommendation of a good friend, I went back and found back issues of the Justice League of America that I was missing from the 1968-1970 era in which you were the writer and you were developing the recognizable Green Arrow/Oliver Queen that the fans now know.

One recommended back issue in particular that I picked up was *Justice League of America* #66 titled "Divided They Fall!" which proceeded *The Brave and The Bold* #85 and the other landmark story in *JLA* #75 in which Ollie lost his fortune. This issue, *JLA* #66, was the first *JLA* issue, in fact, that you wrote. It seems to be in retrospect, to show the first evidence of the Green Arrow persona you would develop with Oliver Queen. He was argumentative and questioned the ideas and plans of the more powerful members of the JLA. He was concerned about the common man. A breath of life was given to the character not seen in earlier stories. Did you come into writing the Justice League of America with ideas about changing the direction of the team and specifically in what you wanted to focus on with character development of Green Arrow in this?

DENNY: Until your question, Scott, I was unaware that I'd started re-characterizing Ollie so early. Here's what might have happened: Ollie had no book of his own, and so I was free to play with him a bit. Maybe gave him the traits you mention to contrast him with the more conventionally virtuous crowd he was hanging with.

SCOTT: Before *JLA* #66 in the stories from 1941 through 1968, Green Arrow had pretty much been a sort of Batman clone with Robin Hood overtures. Green Arrow and Speedy mainly depended on luck, skill, their fortune, and their outrageous trick arrows to get them out of danger and to catch the crooks.

Oliver Queen was a multimillionaire with a secret headquarters under his mansion called the Arrow Cave. Green Arrow also had the Arrow Car, the Arrow Plane the Arrow Signal, and several other similarities to Batman. Green Arrow even had a sidekick like Batman did with Robin. Oliver Queen had a ward named Roy Harper who was his bow slinging partner named Speedy. Then a revamp was in the works with you at the helm. Ollie was popping up as a central figure in the JLA. Neal Adams had just given him a new look in *The Brave And The Bold* #85.



What were you trying to do when you revamped Green Arrow in the late 1960s and early 1970s? Did you have a clear idea? Was it your decision to revamp Green Arrow as a character, or editor Julius Schwartz, or perhaps someone else?

DENNY: Well, as you rightly observe, for most of his history up until then, he was nothing more than a pale Batman clone. Which may be one reason he was never popular enough to merit his own title. So sure, I was almost certainly trying to take him as far from Batman as possible. No sense in having a pair of Batmen running around the DCU, is there?

SCOTT: Not that I wanted this in retrospect. I'm personally glad you didn't do this, but why didn't you just write him out and start over with somebody new? Or in a way, do you feel you did write somebody new but you just kept the same name and identity by changing his financial status, his look, and the events in his life?

DENNY: I got asked the same question after I revamped the Question about 10 years ago. The sort of embarrassing answer is that I simply didn't think of it.

SCOTT: The tale "Snowbirds Don't Fly" in *Green Lantern* #85 and the follow up "They Say It'll Kill Me... But They Won't Say When!" in *Green Lantern* #86 dealt with the infamous part of Roy Harper's life when he dabbled in heroin. This tale led to the break up of the Green Arrow and Speedy partnership that had lasted 30 years at that time in DC Comics. This event in Roy's and Ollie's lives was recently looked at again in a retrospective tale in *Adventures of the DC Universe* #16 with a sort of sequel to the GL/GA: Next Generation with Connor Hawke and Kyle Rayner and it was also retold briefly in a second comic book titled *Arsenal* #1 by Devin Grayson.

What was the impact of the story then? I noticed that you were getting national attention with this series at the time breaking barriers in comics with real world reality in the superhero genre. Was the Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams story arc in *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* cancelled because it was too controversial, or was it for other reasons?

DENNY: In the then much smaller world of fandom, considerable. In the world at large, much greater than I'd anticipated. I think that's when Neal and I started getting invited to universities and the like. It was a comic book and people outside the field were noticing it—at the time that was a big deal.

I have the impression that the powers-that-were rather liked the attention DC was getting. I don't really know why the book was dumped. I was told that the "numbers"—sales—didn't justify continuing it, but that was always the reason given for a cancellation. So I don't know, and I doubt that Julie Schwartz, my excellent editor, does either. Hell, maybe circulation was bad—that's quite possible.

SCOTT: Speaking of Neal Adams, during your run with the JLA, he recently had changed the look of Oliver Queen giving him a Van Dyke beard and a new set of threads in *The Brave And The Bold* #85 where the Emerald Archer and the Caped Crusader joined forces in the tale "The Senator's Been Shot!" in 1969. Also, can you tell us anything about Neal Adams's vision to change the look of Green Arrow with his new outfit back in 1969 and how else that might have related to the revamp?

DENNY: Serendipity. I imagine Neal felt that the old look was dull—and it was—and decided to do a revamp to bring Ollie closer to the tradi-

tional notion of how Robin Hood looked. Maybe his work influenced mine—change the visage, change the personality. It was a long time ago and we weren't taking notes, just doing a month-to-month job. (It is astonishing and gratifying that 28 years later, I'm being asked about the work we were doing. We sensed that we were pushing the envelope, but I doubt that either of us anticipated the long, long life the stuff has had.)

SCOTT: Back tracking a bit, there were other strong character elements to Green Arrow that you added. One of course, one is that you introduced Black Canary in 1969 over into Earth 1 and the JLA. You launched my favorite romantic relationship in comics, the romance of Black Canary and Green Arrow. It's also interesting to note that you introduced the notion of Ollie's love for chili and although this went a bit unspoken, Ollie quit smoking his pipe about the time you started writing too. Must have been Dinah's influence making him quit! Ha! Was Black Canary brought over specifically to be the love interest for Green Arrow in *JLA* #74 and #75?

DENNY: Yep. She was another character without a title of her own and so she was available for whatever use we wanted to put her to. And she added a female element—never a bad thing. And she was easy to look at. That's not bad, either.

SCOTT: How did you like the turnout of their relationship over the years as characters?

DENNY: It's not the way I would have done it, but on its own terms, it's okay.



mine incident during the story with Sister Angelina. Does this mean that all of the John Deleon storyline has now thrown out of continuity?

DENNY: Was the Deleon subplot thrown out of continuity entirely? With apologies to anyone who liked the old version, I must answer yes. Having Ollie voluntarily give up his fortune for humanitarian reasons seems much

stronger dramatically, and makes Ollie a bit less of a loser besides. The dummy lost his fortune to a sleaze and then did nothing about it... It was, malice aforethought, a deliberate revision of continuity, and again, I apologize to anyone who was upset by it.

SCOTT: In 1976, four years after the cancellation of the Green Lantern series, it was revived again with you as the chief writer over the next several years. This re-launched Green Lantern picking up in number-

ing from where it had left off. This relaunch was the second Green Arrow/Green Lantern series that lasted from *Green Lantern* #90-122 (1976-1979).

This time around, the penciller for the series was Mike Grell and later Alex Saviuk on this second series. Mike Grell, whose name is also greatly tied to the Green Arrow history over the years, was hot off from the Elliot S! Maggin written Green Arrow back up tales inside the back pages of *Action Comics*. Did you see Mike Grell's enthusiasm then for the Emerald Archer?

DENNY: Nope. Mike has since said that doing the art for those stories taught him how to write comics, and that is flattering indeed.

SCOTT: The second series had a very distinct different feel from the first ones you worked with in 1970-1972. The second series was more cosmic related and was geared towards Green Lantern since it was really his book. What were some of the thoughts to this in the second

series from 1976-1979 to include Green Arrow and to have a different tone in them?

DENNY: I remember being surprised when asked to revive GA/GA. We'd been there, done that, and wasn't the book cancelled for lack of sales? Anyway, if memory serves, "relevance" was considered dead, and so we took the book in a more conventionally super heroic direction.

SCOTT: It has been said that you began a tradition in making Oliver Queen a rebel rouser of sorts. A vocal person. A hero for the everyman that looks out for the citizens who slip between the cracks of society. When there is a need of a radical sort, many writers over the past 30 years have turned Oliver Queen into that voice since you really began the tradition. You used



SCOTT: Right after that famous team up of Batman and Green Arrow in *The Brave And The Bold* #85, you penned Ollie's second appearance with his new look in *Justice League of America* #75 which would become another landmark issue in the comic book life of Green Arrow. In here, you had Oliver Queen lose his investment company, The Queen Fund, and his fortune to a white-collar crook named John Deleon. This business executive and crook framed Oliver Queen with forged documents that stated that Ollie Queen mishandled Star City Municipal Bonds for his own profit. Deleon did this to drive Ollie out of business so he would benefit.

Recently, towards the end of *Legends of the DC Universe* #9, we learn that Oliver Queen had voluntarily given up Queen Industries because of the land-

Ollie and Hal as characters to discuss relevant social issues in the early 1970s. Since then, other writers have used Ollie Queen in a manner to discuss other social and political issues. Sometimes, they even may seem to contradict. Looking at everything that you and others have written, who is Green Arrow to you?

DENNY: How do I feel about elements in later writer's work that seem to contradict elements I put into Ollie's personality? I was a bit chagrined by his occasional bouts of slaughter. And later writers took him in a libertarian direction—something I would never have done. But everyone is entitled to his or her own interpretation. No right or wrong here, just different. If other writers tried to do nothing more than ape me, the best we could have hoped for is second- or third-rate O'Neil, and that would have done neither them nor me credit.

SCOTT: In the late 1980s and early 1990s, you had the opportunity to work with Green Arrow again. This time around, you worked with him in the first three Green Arrow Annuals. The first annual was an excellent Batman, Green Arrow, and Question trilogy of annuals that you did under the title "Fables" in 1989. These three DC characters will forever be linked with you. Did you specifically ask to write that story arc?

DENNY: No. Mike Gold, then editor of both GA and The Question, asked me to do it.

SCOTT: Do you foresee writing any more tales involving Green Arrow and the Question or Batman and Green Arrow?

DENNY: In the proverbial New York minute. Some editor-type person asks me, please.

SCOTT: Another standout one shot that all Green Arrow and Batman fans hopefully have in their collection of favorite books was the story "Poison Tomorrow" which dealt with the brave and the bold team of The Emerald Archer and "The Terse and Scary" Dark Knight as they take on Poison Ivy after she is responsible in a major part for the near death of Dinah Lance due to a neuro-toxin. What do you think has been the secret ingredient in keeping this pair one of the most interesting castings?

DENNY: They're complimentary characters. Different in many, many ways, but both are human-scaled, and both are about, among other things, developing human potential.

SCOTT: One of the things that I noticed a few years after the Crisis of Infinite Earths was that Ollie Queen now did not seem to know the identity of Batman anymore. What did you have in mind with this change?

DENNY: When I took over editing Bats, it seemed to me that everyone with the possible exception of the Dalai Lama knew that Bruce was Batman. Secret identity? Not if dozens of people were in on the secret. So we used Zero Hour to establish that only Alf, Robin, Ra's Al Ghul, Talia and maybe Leslie Tompkins were privy to it. Gordon could know—he's smart enough to figure it out—but chooses not to.

SCOTT: My last question to you now, is there any other Green Arrow related tales that you personally want to write or anything you see coming about under your editorial reigns?

DENNY: Scott Peterson has suggested we do an arc or a graphic novel

about Ollie's first meeting with Batman. I'd love to. But, again, I can't say how soon it will happen. Maybe next year, or the year after.

SCOTT: Mr. O'Neil, I really want to thank you for the opportunity in which you took some time to answer these questions over the years with your work about Green Arrow with your busy schedule. You've written a multitude of other stories outside of this character, but to me, your work with Green Arrow has been especially rewarding for me to read as a fan. I'd personally like to thank you because you breathed life into a character that I've been reading non-stop since I was six years old which has followed me through all my facets of life growing up each month as I read.

DENNY: I hope all the above is of some use to you, and I thank you for giving me a chance to recall some of the headier days of my youth. ■

Scott McCullar is the author of the Unofficial Green Arrow Compendium fan website at www.greenarrow.scottmccullar.com which was launched in October 1997. He is serving as a technical advisor for Kevin Smith's upcoming new Green Arrow series that is relaunching in early 2001.

Outside of his teaching as an art professor at Springfield College in Illinois and working as a professional illustrator, Scott helps out in his spare time by serving as the webmaster for writer Chuck Dixon at www.dixonverse.com and also for writers Jay Faerber, Devin Grayson, and Brian K. Vaughan at www.2kcomics.com web site.

Currently he is a freelance writer for the DC Universe Roleplaying Game putting his mark on the Gotham Sourcebook and several other upcoming supplements. He will be working on various other comic projects as a penciller and writer in 2001.

The dream of this Battling Bowmen fan is to work with his all time favorite characters on a Green Arrow series either as a writer or artist sometime down the road soon.

Dean's List

Denny's recommended reading for fan and pro alike!

Screenplay - by Syd Field

Adventures in Screen Trade - by William Goldman

Hitchcock - by Trauffault

Writing to Sell - by Scott Meredith

Comics and Sequential Art - by Will Eisner

Graphic Storytelling - by Will Eisner

Understanding Comics - by Scott McCloud

McLuhan for Beginners - by W. Terrence Gordon

The Writer's Journey - by Christopher Vogler

Getting into the Business of Comics -

by Lurene Haines

Batman & Robins

By John Wells

In a five year span between 1968 and 1973, he wrote just over 100 stories for Julius Schwartz's *Batman* and *Detective Comics*, 66 of them for the Dark Knight himself. In the intervening years, though, his work has largely been consigned to back issue bins, with only his introductory Man-Bat stories (illustrated by Neal Adams) reprinted with any regularity. His name was Frank Robbins.

Born on September 9, 1917, Frank Robbins was an artistic prodigy, racking up a series of awards before his 10th year, painting a succession of murals when he was 13 and culminating with a Rockefeller grant at the age of 15. Over the course of 1935, Frank worked up sketches for murals at Radio City Music Hall, produced posters and art for RKO Pictures and received another award at the National Academy art show.

Robbins began dabbling in comics in the late 1930s, taking over Jack Kirby's *Lone Rider* comic strip in 1939 and, more significantly, the Associated Press' *Scorchy Smith* in May of that year. With Frank at the helm, the aviation strip began to pick up subscribers again, enough to warrant the addition of a Sunday page in 1941.

Regarded as a rising star in the comics field, Robbins was among those invited to jump ship to rival syndicate King Features. On June 5, 1944, some 24 hours before D-Day, Frank introduced an aviation strip of his own: *Johnny Hazard*. It became a modest success and its leading man adapted to the post-war world as a freelance pilot. In the latter half of the 1950s, Johnny shifted gears and became a secret agent.

The long decline of the adventure comic strip was already underway and, with his list of subscribing papers shrinking, Robbins sought other venues to supplement his income. Over the years, he'd done illustrations for magazines such as *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In 1968, he visited National Periodical Publications (a.k.a. DC Comics).

Robbins came away with script assignments for Murray Boltinoff's *Superboy* (effective with issue #149), Julius Schwartz's *The Flash* (beginning with #180-181) as well as both of Schwartz's *Batman* titles. His arrival had coincided with the retirement of Bob Kane (and, consequently, his ghost... the legendary Sheldon Moldoff). The end result was that Frank's first issues of *Batman* (#204) and *Detective* (#378) were also inaugural stories for pencillers Irv Novick and Bob Brown.

Although some of his early efforts tended to push the humor button a bit too heavily (as in *Flash* #180-181's "Attack of the Samuroids" and *Detective* #380's "Marital Bliss Miss"), Robbins adapted quickly and made the *Batman* title his own. His *Flash* stint proved short-lived (#183-185) but Frank's run on *Superboy* (#149-172) proved to be exemplary, a wonderful string of character-based stories that were easily the highlight of the period's otherwise dreary Superman books.

Much of the foundation for the "back to basics" approach of the 1970s was ushered in by Frank in 1969. The removal of Robin from the series (via Dick Grayson's departure for college) seems to have been in the back of Schwartz's mind for a time, given the quartet of *Batman* vs. Robin covers that appeared at the onset of Robbins' tenure (#378, 379, 381, 382). Transitional episodes included a *Batman* solo episode that kept Dick Grayson

sidelined with the flu (*Batman* #216) and an issue whose cover played up the impending split (*Detective* #393).

Batman #217 made it clear that far more was in the works than the removal of Robin. With Dick Grayson's departure, Bruce Wayne announced his intention to close up Wayne Manor, mothball the Batcave and move into a penthouse in the heart of Gotham, "streamlining the operation." Aunt Harriet, who'd come to symbolize the "Batman" TV series even though she'd been created two years before it aired, was already gone, having been used only once by Robbins in *Detective* #380.

As he'd done when he first acquired *Batman* and *Detective* in 1964, Schwartz put a contemporary sheen on the series by, in Robbins' words, "re-establishing the trademark of the 'old' Batman—to strike new fear into the new breed of gangsterism sweeping the world! Today this new breed of rat -- uses the modern weapons of ... 'phoney respectability'—'big business fronts'—illegal cover-ups'—and hides in the fortress towers of Gotham's Metropolis. We're moving out of this suburban sanctuary, to live in the heart of that sprawling urban blight—to dig them out where they live and fatten on the innocent."

Although he excelled at crime stories with more realistic adversaries, Robbins used his share of costumed villains. They ranged from the pre-existing Scarecrow (*Detective* #389), Catwoman (for whom he designed a new costume in *Batman* #210) and Getaway Genius (*Batman* #254) to his own creations like the Schemer (*Batman* #204-205), the Armorer (*Detective* #381) and the Masquerader (*Detective* #390). Of particular note were his bizarre Ten-Eyed Man (*Batman* #226 and 231) and the Spook (*Detective* #434-435 and *Batman* #252).

Robbins' best known "villain" was Man-Bat, introduced in a trilogy that represented virtually his only collaboration with Neal Adams (*Detective* #400, 402, 407). The next two chapters in the Langstrom family saga were illustrated by Frank himself (#416, 429). Robbins brought the story full circle in his last *Batman* script, where Kirk Langstrom finally achieved his goal of using the Man-Bat persona to fight crime (*Batman* #254).

Despite his long run on *Johnny Hazard*, Robbins-the-comic-book-artist was more than some readers could take. Although a student of the Milton Caniff-Noel Sickles style of art, Frank's own work had evolved in a more impressionistic, cartoony direction. With the realistic style typified by Neal Adams in vogue, Robbins' art proved to be a source of controversy. Some fans loved it, some hated it. Frank ended up doing story and art on five *Batman* stories (*Detective* #416, 420-421, 426, 429) and his final Jason Bard installment (#435).

In addition to writing a pair of Robin two-parters that relocated Dick Grayson to Hudson University (*Detective* #394-395, 398-399), Frank also became the regular writer on the "Batgirl" strip. Under his direction, Barbara Gordon found a love interest in the form of Vietnam vet and aspiring detective Jason Bard (*Detective* #392-393), revealed her true identity to her father (#417, 422) and finally retired her Batgirl identity after a successful run for Congress (#422-424). Waiting in the wings was Jason Bard, who starred in a sextet of back-up stories that, with no costumes in sight, came

closer to the more realistic environment of Robbins' "Johnny Hazard" than anything else he wrote for the Bat-books.

Like other Batman writers, Robbins had his own set of recurring characters, notably:

Virginia "Ginny" Jenkins, the girl voted "most likely to be Batman's wife" (*Detective* #380, 391).

Marla Manning, the Gotham Times reporter whose "Victims Anonymous" series inspired Bruce Wayne's own "Victims, Inc. Program" (*Batman* #217). The platinum blonde appeared in four stories (beginning with *Batman* #220), two illustrated by Robbins (*Detective* #416, 421). Though she only appeared with Bruce once socially (*Detective* #416) and was decidedly on the outs with him in her last appearance (*Batman* #249), Marla was the closest thing Bruce Wayne had to a recurring love interest during the early 1970s.

Gwen Atkins, Bruce Wayne's secretary (*Detective* #394, 403 and behind the scenes in *Batman* #217 and 220). Bob Haney and Jim Aparo continued to use Gwen during the 1970s in *The Brave and The Bold* but she was finally written out of the series by Len Wein in 1980, said to have left to take care of "personal business" (*Batman* #323).

Tom Carson, the Ralph Nader-esque "consumer crusader" (*Detective* #415 and *Batman* #249).

The Gotham Penitentiary's Warden Howe (*Batman* #206, 246; *Detective* #421), who has no known connection to the inept interim Police Commissioner Andrew Howe of 1996's "Contagion" serial in the Bat-books.

Steve "Shotgun" Smith, "the toughest cop in Gotham" (*Detective* #428, 436), with parallels to "The French Connection"'s "Popeye" Doyle. Smith was revived by Chuck Dixon in 1993 as Gotham's county sheriff (*Robin* #1-2) and has enjoyed a renewed presence in the related titles ever since.

Outside of his Man-Bat stories, Robbins' best known work may be a simple six-page story in the back of *Batman* #250, one that was included in 1989's *Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told* and adapted (in concept) as "Legends of the Dark Knight" in 1998's *Batman: The Animated Series*.

Entitled "The Batman Nobody Knows," it found three urban kids on a camping trip giving their impressions of the Dark Knight to Bruce Wayne. The accounts variously described him as an unearthly Man-Bat, a high-tech "one-man army" and a ten-foot tall superman. Determined to set the record straight, Bruce put on his costume and leaped out of the shadows—only to be laughed off by the three boys.

"Whatever else it proves," Bruce decided, "The Batman's frightening image scares the guilty . . . not the innocent."

By the end of 1973, Schwartz's Batman responsibilities had been halved, with *Detective* going to incoming editor Archie Goodwin. Robbins' writing assignments effectively dried up and his DC work now consisted of art jobs in titles such as *Plop!* and *The Shadow*. Frank ended up moving to Marvel, working on a variety of titles. The highlight was his work on the Roy Thomas-scripted *Invaders*.

Robbins had reached a crossroads in 1977. As Alex Toth related it in the April 1995 issue of Robin Snyder's *The Comics*, Johnny Hazard's subscriber list had continued to decline and it was time for King Features to renew its contract. "KFS wanted a no-contract, month-to-month deal henceforth. Ignominious, indeed. Frank said in effect: This ? Stuff it!, and walked." The final episode appeared on Saturday, August 20, where Johnny lamented that "the day of the he-man is finally over!" As had happened in the beginning, other events overshadowed the end, albeit not of the same proportions as D-

Day: Elvis Presley died on August 16.

By the end of the year, Robbins had completed his commitments to Marvel and made plans to head to Mexico for a life of retirement with his second wife. Frank's progressive vision problems culminated in blindness in his right eye. Toth noted that "Frank painted daily, many paintings stacking up, but not one of 'em for sale."

Robbins' wife died in 1989 and he later remarried to a woman named Francis, whom he'd met in 1990. In a 1994 letter to Al Dellings, reprinted in the aforementioned issue of *The Comics*, Frank described her as "26 yrs. my junior who tells me age is just a numbers game. . . So what's to complain?"

On November 28, 1994, Frank Robbins died of heart failure, two months after his 77th birthday. He was survived by Fran and his son and daughter, Michael and Laura.

Robbins' creations for DC remain in good hands thanks to the stewardship of Chuck Dixon. Having already made good use of Shotgun Smith, Dixon has recently revived Jason Bard and Man-Bat in the pages of *Birds of Prey* and *Robin*, as well.

Robbins' own work is largely out of print, though. The recent *Batman In The Sixties* and *Batman In The Seventies* included his first Batgirl two-parter, the landmark *Batman* #217 and *Detective* #407's third Man-Bat story. During the mid-1980s, the first nine years of *Johnny Hazard* dailies were collected in a series of ten books by Ken Pierce.

Earlier this year, picking up where Pierce left off, *The Missing Years* magazine added *Johnny Hazard* to its roster. Issue #33's first installment is a complete story from the fall of 1953. It seems that the day of the he-man isn't quite over yet! ■

Frank Robbins' Bat-Scripts

Batman

Batman #204-207, 209-212, 214-217, 219-222, 226, 230-231, 236, 246, 249, 250 (two stories), 252, 254

Detective Comics #378-383, 386, 389-394, 396, 398, 400-403, 407, 409, 412-413, 415-417, 420-421, 423-424, 426-430, 432-436

Batgirl

Detective #388-389, 392-393, 396-397, 404-424

Robin

Detective #394-395, 398-399

Jason Bard

Detective #425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435

John Wells has never been the same since being exposed to dozens of action heroes in the pages of DC's 100-Page Super-Spectaculars and Limited Collectors' Editions in 1974. He's gone on to contribute to Amazing Heroes, CAPA-ALPHA, CBM, CBG, Comic Effect, Comic Reader and the Independent Comics Group's DC Index series.

John has also compiled appearance checklists for tens of thousands of characters from DC's 60+ year history, tapping into that data as Mikishawm on the DC Comics Message Boards and for his regular "Historama" column in It's A Fanzine.

Aquaman & Green Arrow

The Lost Episode

by Steve Skeates

Time (with all its facets, all its ramifications) may not be the actual central theme of this lost episode (an adventure slated to appear within the pages of *Aquaman* #57, though, as most of you well know, it was never fully drawn let alone published, never made it onto the racks let alone into the hands of the reading public) but time, this time, sure comes close.

First off, instead of picking up right where the previous issue left off, a bit of time has been allowed to pass—mere moments is all, to be sure, yet, as we soon shall learn, important moments, obviously brimming with significant—albeit unshown—action. Page one: we are zeroed in upon the outside of the Powers Lab, the concentration of this visual centered upon a certain door which now slowly opens, said slowness being indicated via the use of several panels, each succeeding one with the door a tad wider open, this not being the traditional one-panel splash page, but a six-panel entity.

It is of course Aquaman himself who staggers out, wounded at the shoulder and the hip, bleeding profusely (enough blood so that the reader will surely truly marvel at the sea king's ability to stand, to hold himself erect, to actually move about). One question may well arise, however—how did this happened? Why has this hero been shot? Could it be then that we are in need here of a flashback? Perhaps, and yet I honestly didn't think so. Instead, I was counting upon the regular readers of the series easily remembering the set-up I had provided in the previous issue: guards attempting to knock down the door to that tiny "control room" currently occupied solely by the sea king, their captain telling them to have their guns at the ready, that once the door was down to "shoot to kill!" Obviously, said rent-a-cops had done all that had been asked of them, yet somehow Aquaman had survived (while also quite likely knocking his various attackers out cold!)

But, to get back to the bloodied and bruised King of Atlantis—even as he continues to stumble along, the sea king's thoughts of course are of his time limit, that mere hour nature somehow allows a being such as he to remain out of the sea. This go-round, Aquaman has used up close to the entire hour. Must get back underwater! Must do so immediately!

Marvel no longer, then, over this hero's fortitude, for, as he wobbles around a corner, into an alleyway, all that has occurred to him this day at last takes its toll and he tumbles, prone, into heavy-breathing unconsciousness. Yet, how long will it last, this breathing? Can this be the end of Arthur Curry? At least he still breathes even as a shadow falls over him—the shadow of someone supremely pleased to have happened upon a superhero, the shadow of someone who now gives forth with a hearty "heh-heh-heh!"

Again there is the passage of time, as, in that alley, *hours* later, the sea king comes around. ("Hours? How can it be hours?") His wounds have somewhat healed over, the bleeding has basically ceased. Yet, it is, again, his time-limit that Aquaman is most concerned with. Rather amazed, actually, that he is still alive, the King of Atlantis can only conclude that he was out cold for a very, very short period of time, that the hour somehow isn't yet up.

Still, who knows how very few seconds remain?

Thus we are privy now to a race against time, as Aquaman, employing some sort of sixth sense, rushes inexorably at a breakneck pace toward the nearest body of water. Lake Erie it is—out of place to be sure, seeing as it is Detroit in which this adventure takes place. A mistake in geography upon my part, yet I always figured (were I ever called on it, though so far that has yet to occur) I would evoke that old Earth-One chestnut: explain that in the comic book world, Detroit is indeed a port upon Lake Erie, while in our world (the real world) it is on Lake St. Claire, which is connected to the fairly distant Lake Erie via the Detroit River.

In any event, Aquaman sees the lake and, relatively overjoyed, feeling that his ordeal is nearing its end, rushes toward it, dives in, breathes deep, and nearly drowns. He breaks to the surface, choking, coughing his guts out. Somehow he can no longer breathe water. He thinks about that, taking an inventory of his inner-workings and realizes that his telepathic powers are missing as well. What's happened to him? And, where should he now turn? What to do? What to do?

His only answer is to get on home! To be with his people, to see Mera, to talk to Dr. Vulko (a man he trusts implicitly) and with the good doctor's help, hopefully learn what has happened to him. He means of getting back entail first of all getting to the coast, to New York City, and his chosen method for doing that is the popular-back-then practice of hitch-hiking. As luck would have it, it is through just that activity that he meets up with Green Arrow who is piloting a van (one that looks rather like a hippie-bus) returning from some sort of adventure of his own.

The rest of the story I have no actual memory of, except of course that the whole thing is based rather loosely upon Stan Lee's *Fantastic Four* adventure entitled "This Man, This Monster"—the age-old practice of basing one comicbook story upon a previous one, often in my case the latter penned by one of my heroes—that previously-mentioned shadowy figure having somehow (through, no doubt, the use of some big bulky Kirbysque piece of sci-fi equipment) stolen Aquaman's powers.

How does Green Arrow help Aquaman regain those powers? To tell you the truth, I haven't the slightest idea; that particular piece of the puzzle is lost to me memorywise. As luck would have it, however, I did (believe it or not) write and sell a version of the rest of this story, a version that's mainly mystical rather than steeped in the usual funnybook pseudo-sci-fi, a version that may ultimately prove quite useful vis-a-vis our *figuring out* what plotwise next transpired within the life of the sea king.

Anyone remember the Warren character known as Prince Targo? My own creation and rather an embarrassment, this dude was a cross between Aquaman and Aqualad, and his three published adventures (making the scene within various issues of *Eerie* magazine) were mere leftovers, stories that never got published thanks to the cancellation of Aquaman—two left-

over Aqualad tales, one leftover Aquaman adventure, all three quite extensively rewritten. It is the latter (entitled "The Once Powerful Prince" which appeared in *Eerie* #40 back in June of 1972) we should be most concerned with here, for this was my re-write of *Aquaman* #57.

Just as I made a point within my seventeen issues of Aquaman to demonstrate as best I could (though back in those days we were all very much squirming beneath the watchful thumb of a rather powerful blue-nosed Comics Code Authority) that Aquaman and Mera led a very active sex life, Prince Targo too was quite active sexually—not, though, with one specific woman, but with a rather vast variety of well-drawn surface-dwelling sexpots. And it was one of these partners that stole from Targo the mystic ring that gave him his undersea powers (breathing-the-water included). Ahh, how much easier it was to handle this story-thread mystically, as opposed to having some villainous character employing all sorts of heavy sci-fi machinery.

Subsequently Prince Targo learned of various acts of modern-day piracy

occurring near-by, upon the lake, and became convinced they were being committed by someone his most recent bedmate had stolen the ring for (quite likely had been hired by him to steal it). There followed quite quickly, then, a search, a confrontation, and a fight through which Targo regained the ring. Certainly something similar happened to the sea king within issue number 57, and somehow Green Arrow provided some sort of necessary assistance.

Yes, indeed, I do indeed wish I could remember the ending of this lost episode a bit more clearly. Still and all, this story's attempt to become a comic book took place all of almost thirty years ago—ah yes, time to consider the passage of time one last time—and therefore I'm quite amazed (and you readers out there may, if you wish, consider yourselves downright lucky) that I remember ANY of it at all. ■

Perhaps best known for his work on Aquaman in the late '60s and early '70s, Silver Age scripting legend Steve Skeates currently self-publishes a series of marvelous graphic novelettes.

To order a catalog of Steve's work, please send \$1 to: Steve Skeates, 95 Jefferson Ave., Fairport, NY 14450.

Steve on Strange

by Bob Brodsky

Steve Englehart's original five-year stint at Marvel Comics during the early 1970s stands as one of the most creative periods ever realized by a comic book writer.

Beginning with his revelatory work on Captain America in 1972, Englehart fused his considerable creative talents with an extensive knowledge of Marvel's history, and the burning desire to make every story count.

Englehart's Dr. Strange stories, first with Frank Brunner and then Gene Colan, performed the masterful slight of hand of returning Strange to his Lee/Ditko roots, while also expanding his world to meet the demands of a new decade's readers.

I spoke with Steve by telephone back in May 1998 for an extensive interview, some of which was featured in *Comic Book Artist* #2 and *The O'Neil Observer* #1. I've extrapolated Steve's complete comments regarding Dr. Strange.

Steve's recent Marvel projects *HellCat* and *Big Town* have given a new generation the opportunity to experience his organic approach to storytelling. Now as then, Englehart's characters have real lives and his stories never fail to respect their audience.

BOB: Looking back on Dr. Strange, Steve, you and Frank Brunner really returned him to his Lee and Ditko counter culture roots. Was collaborating with Frank, a guy your age, lib-

erating after having worked mainly with older, more traditional artists during your first couple of years at Marvel?

STEVE: Yeah, I guess so. I hadn't really thought about it in those terms, but Frank and I were good friends and of an age, and we both had ideas on what we wanted to do with the book. It had been nothing. Frank called it the "Monster of the Month Club" when he took it over. I'm not sure if we were co-producers right from the beginning.

BOB: Are you referring to when you joined Frank on the title by replacing the series' former writer Gardner Fox?

STEVE: Yeah, Gardner Fox was the writer before me. I'd forgotten that Frank had worked with him before I came on.

BOB: Yes, I believe he wrote just a couple of issues.

STEVE: Well I had that whole idea about the ancient one dying and so on and so forth, but fairly quickly Frank and I got to a co-producing situation. Dr. Strange was a bi-monthly book, and every two months I would go to Frank's place down in New York City, or he would come to my place in Connecticut. This was before we both moved to California, and by the time we got together we both would have thought about things that we would like to see happen in the book. And, in the same manner as throwing things up in the air so that they'll come down later to make the stories more complex, we'd sit there and we'd have two different visions of what we wanted to do that month and then we would have dinner and spend the night marrying them,

playing off each other. So the stories were always choked full of stuff, and the stuff came from the fact that we were both young and, of an age, as you say.

This is probably jumping ahead, but Frank was slow and couldn't keep up with anything more than a bi-monthly book. So when it became clear that the book was going to go monthly pretty soon, and he didn't really want to go any faster, Frank left and (Gene) Colan came on.

Colan was a totally different deal, because at that point, story wise, the book was entirely mine. I mean Gene had nothing to input on the story, although the art was fabulous. The great thing about Gene was, and I'm not trying to run past Brunner, but I'm just going on with this, Gene was an old school guy who really didn't understand a lot of stuff that he was being asked to do, but it would look great. If you told him what to draw, he would draw the hell out of it. And, I don't mean that in a patronizing way. You know when Marv Wolfman was originally putting together The Prisoner book idea, he wanted Gene to draw it, and Gene went out and looked at some films that Marv had got (this was all pre-VCR, of course), and Gene said, "But, it's just a guy on an island". Gene could not understand what The Prisoner was about, and I'm not sure that Gene understood what Dr. Strange was about. But it didn't matter because if you said, "This is what's happening," he would draw it. So this is all a way of saying that the story with Brunner was Brunner and me, and the story with Colan was just me. In any event, I have very high regard for both of them.

(Continued on page 80)

dateline: 1971

By Bob Brodsky

A perceptive person whom I wish I could recall, recently wrote something to the effect that a comic book fan is defined at 12-years-old.

I believe the author, who I'm no doubt mangling through my paraphrase, was commenting on how our adolescent point-of-view toward comics is frozen and carried with us throughout our lives.

Well, because I turned 12 in January of 1971, I'd like to use this occasional column to focus in on that year by distilling childhood recollection with, God help me, adult analysis. I hope the following comments are of interest to you no matter your age. Don't forget we all share a 1971 in our past, it's just a matter of when.

Rummaging through my mangy comic book collection (I ever so stupidly sold most of them in 1974 to buy a stereo, and have spent the next three decades trying to rebuild what I took for granted then.), I am struck by the power of early

1970s DC's. The line looked great, with Neal Adams' magnificent covers, and those cool, round, "Marvel style" character insignias on the top left corner of the books.

The comic's contents were just as good as their outsides. Relevance was in the air; Kirby was cooking; O'Neil and Adams delivered the definitive Batman; while Mort Weisinger's retirement in late 1970 opened up the Superman Family titles to talents like O'Neil, Schwartz, Kanigher, Bridwell, and Anderson.

The subtle revamping of the Superman books had actually begun back in 1968 when Murray Boltinoff assumed the editorship of Superboy, and put together the astonishing creative team of Frank Robbins, Bob Brown, and Wally Wood.

Please refer to John Wells' Robbins article in this issue for more on the Boy of Steel's greatest hour.

Meanwhile, the fall of 1970 brought Kirby on Jimmy Olsen and Mike Sekowsky to *Supergirl's Adventure Comics*, as more of Weisinger's fiefdom chipped away for the greater creative good.

Though not well documented, the Sekowsky *Supergirl's* are well worth searching out. Mike's story and art surpassed even his work on Wonder Woman and he allowed Kara to grow from Weisinger's Kryptonian robot to a wild eyed, impulsive, superheroine in training.

Of particular note is the way Sekowsky, like Robbins, stretched and dare I say, twisted, the Phantom Zone, Kandor, and other mythos of the Weisinger years in the service of a new kind of Superman Family story.

I'd like to conclude with a brief checklist of sorts, randomly naming



© 2000 DC

four of my favorite books from '71:

Superman #233 (January) From Neal Adams' Max Fleischer-like Superman cover shot, to O'Neil, Swan, and Anderson's revelatory story "Superman Breaks Loose," this first Schwartz edited issue is one of the best remembered comic books of my early 40's age group. You know, volumes have been written about O'Neil, Adams, and Giordano's collaborations, and rightfully so, but what about the crisp story telling of the O'Neil/"Swanderson" team?

The New Gods #3 (June-July) Whoever said Jack Kirby couldn't write never saw this issue. Like *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #79 (August-September 1970), Kirby's "Death is the Black Racer" stands as a parable on violence. One of the most powerful comic book stories I have ever read.

Adventure Comics #406 (May) Sekowsky's quirky Girl of Steel in all her early '70s glory. Great title, "Suspicion," and what a cover!

Aquaman #56 (March-April) With "The Creature that Devoured Detroit," Steve Skeates, Jim Aparo, and Dick Giordano delivered a tough, multilevel masterpiece that was too hard hitting for the DC establishment. Please see Steve's Aquaman piece later in this issue for a first person account from the writer himself about events occurring during this period. ■



© 2000 DC

Steve on Strange

(Continued from page 78))

BOB: *The change for Brunner to Colan sort of reminded me of the Spider-Man's transition for Lee and Ditko to Lee and Romita.*

STEVE: Yeah. That's a different strip of course, but I think that's accurate. Ditko was obviously contributing a hell of a lot, and then they had to follow along without it.

BOB: *Did you hang out a lot with Frank after you both moved to the Bay Area in the summer of 1973?*

STEVE: Well, when we moved out here, we got a house together. We lived together for a year and then, after our lease was up, went off in different directions out here. But, even when we moved, we ended up living five minutes apart. Frank later got divorced and moved down to L.A. to get into animation, but his wife and kids stayed up here. Jan's still here and we see each other now and again. So, yeah, we were good friends.

BOB: *Steve, your and Frank's story "Book of Revelations" still strikes me as being outrageous in any medium. Did you catch a lot of flack for that book?*

STEVE: Not at all. I think that was very much in tune with what people were interested in seeing at that time. I know Stan got nervous about it. Stan, you know, who had been retired as overseer for several years thought it was pushing the envelope just a little far, but the reader reaction was very positive, sales continued to climb. Again, it was not Marvel's policy in those days to say, "You can't do this". I mean, I'm sure that if we had unleashed a storm of controversy or something there might have been some repercussions somewhere, I mean not anything dismal, but we might have been told, "Don't do that again". I can't even imagine they were have taken us off the book or something, because it just didn't work that way. But, in event, that didn't happen. People thought it was cool.

BOB: *Yeah, it was really cool. I also enjoyed "The Orb Series." Besides the obvious Lewis Carroll backdrop, I detected some Steve Gerber influence in there as well. The laid back talking caterpillar, and a lot of the surrealism reminded me of what he was doing on Man-*

Thing at the time. Was Gerber an influence for you on that particular project?

STEVE: Not at all. I read all his stuff. No one has ever called it Gerberesque before, and I have never thought of it that way, so I don't really have an initial reaction to that.

BOB: *Just a personal opinion.*

STEVE: No, the thing with Strange was, when I wrote him in The Defenders he was just a superhero who had magical schticks. When I started writing him as himself, I thought, "You know if I'm going to write about a magician, I really ought to learn something about magic because I don't really know anything about magic." And so I started studying Tarot and astrology and so on and so forth, and as I learned things there, I was feeding them back into the book. And so, Strange for me became a way of imparting mystical knowledge that I was picking up elsewhere. That particular series was about death. It was like I wanted to write about what it would be like to be dead from a Dr. Strange point of view, not necessarily from a clinical point of view. But I think the Lewis Carroll stuff, the caterpillar, I think that was mostly Frank. And, then, of course, Frank went on to work with Steve to do Howard the Duck. So, again, Howard came after Strange so it's not as if Gerber was influencing Frank at that point. But, I think we, all of us, had similar interests. So we were all coming at it from different angles but we all touched base at some point there in the middle about what we found interesting.

BOB: *Absolutely.*

STEVE: Actually Disney's Alice in Wonderland had been re-released, this was pre-VCR, some time after we moved to California. Frank and Jan and I went out to some drive-in north of here and watched it twice that night because, "Wow, it's Disney animation," what a rare thing to be able to actually see. Now, of course, you can buy 'em all at Blockbuster, but we were both inspired by Disney's Alice in Wonderland right around that time. And I believe that Orb stuff would have been after we moved to California, so I mean I'm sure that was an influence, the actual Alice in Wonderland of Disney, not of Lewis Carroll. Yeah, so we had Disney's Alice in Wonderland, we had me wanting to write about death, we had whatever, and it all came, it was the same deal. We threw all that stuff together and made up those stories.

BOB: *It was wonderful stuff. You kicked off Dr. Strange's return to his own title in 1974 with his stabbing by a religious zealot you named Silver Dagger. Was Silver Dagger representative of your views on God and religion? You had Silver Dagger and you had "Book of Revelations." Kind of a one, two punch there.*

STEVE: Well it was, definitely. I mean "Book of Revelations" wasn't my view on God and religion. It was interesting having this guy turn into God, or planning to turn into God. I thought, it was Strange, it just seemed like you could really just go way over the top, except with Strange it was never over the top because it was always within the realm of this mystical infinity, cosmic thing. And so we did God, we did Death, and then after Frank left, I did Earth with Umar, I did the Devil. I had a guy tell me just recently that that issue about Hell saved his life at one point. It really hit him at a time when he was very down. And I told him, "Well, yeah, I was trying to convey mystical stuff", and he said, "Well, I don't believe in mysticism". So, you don't know. You just throw all this stuff out there and see what happens.

BOB: *I've heard from other writers that Dr. Strange is one of the hardest assignments in comics. What's your opinion?*

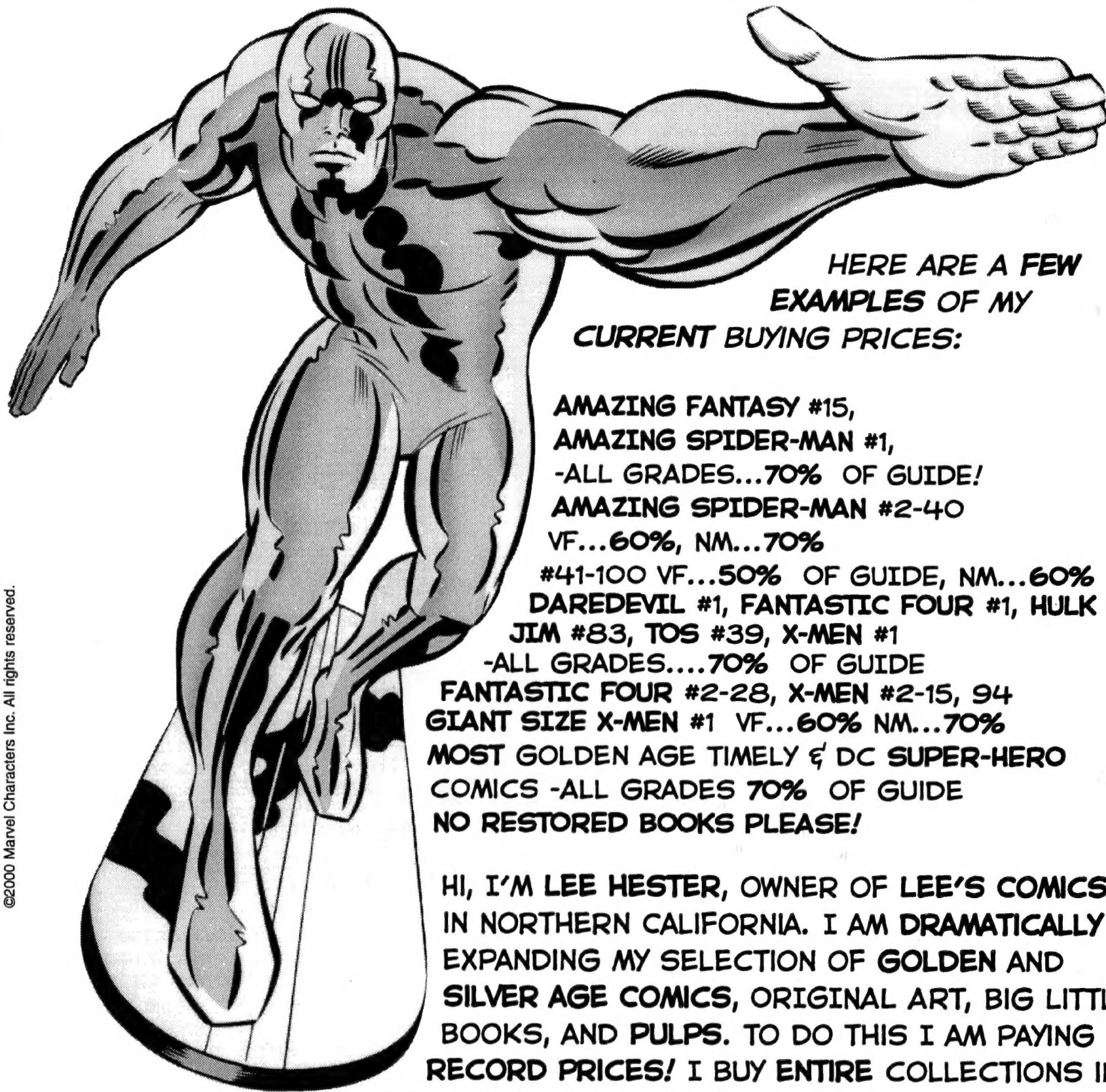
STEVE: Well, not for me. It requires, if done right, some specialized knowledge and a feel for the cosmic, which some writers have more than others. For me, it fit right in.

BOB: *Yes, it touches people in different ways. Also, I was a big fan of Clea, and how you made her and Stephen so sensual together. She was Steve's lover, not his girlfriend like Lois Lane.*

STEVE: Right. Well, you know, again, they lived in a very sensual environment. That place, the Sanctum Sanctorum, was full shadows and silks, and the two of them were there with Wong, who of course was faithful and wouldn't say anything. And, again, we were young, this was in the '70s, people had a lot of sex and it just seemed like this guy isn't going to be holding her at arm's length. He's dealing with the secrets of the universe, you know. ■

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE O'NEIL OBSERVER: "O'Neil's Non-Superheroes," with Richard Dragon, Judo Master, Bat Lash, and much more!

WANTED: VINTAGE COMICS!



HERE ARE A FEW
EXAMPLES OF MY
CURRENT BUYING PRICES:

AMAZING FANTASY #15,
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1,
-ALL GRADES...70% OF GUIDE!
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #2-40
VF...60%, NM...70%

#41-100 VF...50% OF GUIDE, NM...60%
DAREDEVIL #1, FANTASTIC FOUR #1, HULK #1
JIM #83, TOS #39, X-MEN #1

-ALL GRADES...70% OF GUIDE
FANTASTIC FOUR #2-28, X-MEN #2-15, 94
GIANT SIZE X-MEN #1 VF...60% NM...70%
MOST GOLDEN AGE TIMELY & DC SUPER-HERO
COMICS -ALL GRADES 70% OF GUIDE
NO RESTORED BOOKS PLEASE!

HI, I'M LEE HESTER, OWNER OF LEE'S COMICS
IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. I AM DRAMATICALLY
EXPANDING MY SELECTION OF GOLDEN AND
SILVER AGE COMICS, ORIGINAL ART, BIG LITTLE
BOOKS, AND PULPS. TO DO THIS I AM PAYING
RECORD PRICES! I BUY ENTIRE COLLECTIONS IN
ALL GRADES, THE "GOOD" ALONG WITH THE "BAD". I
OFFER FRIENDLY, HELPFUL SERVICE, AND IMMEDIATE PAYMENT. IF YOU ARE
SELLING PLEASE GIVE ME A CALL AT MY PALO ALTO LOCATION.

LEE'S
COMICS

3783 EL CAMINO REAL
PALO ALTO, CA 94306
(650) 493-4042
LEE@LCOMICS.COM

2ND GREAT LOCATION!
2222 S. EL CAMINO REAL
SAN MATEO, CA 94003
(650) 571-1489

WHEN IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, VISIT OUR BEAUTIFUL STORES!

COLLECTORS WILL LOVE THE NEXT ISSUE OF CBM...

WHO WAS ROBERT TURNER?

Will Murray provides a rare glimpse into the life and times of a Golden Age Great who worked for Centaur, Fox, Quality, Ace, & Prize!

BEYOND SPIDER-MAN!

Steve's Ditko's overlooked work at Charlton from 1969-74 was absolutely, positively brilliant!

BRAINIAC!

The evolution of Superman's most diabolical Silver Age Adversary!

ATLAS APPARITION!

The trials & tribulations of Atlas' Homer The Happy Ghost!

RARE REINDEERS!

DC esoteric Rudolph annuals are tough-to-find and a joy to collect!

THE UNKNOWN RUSS MANNING!

His work appeared in comic titles you never heard of!



Issue #84, January 2001
celebrating a new millennium of
comic book collecting!

On sale soon at your favorite comic shop!